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THE
ALTAR AND THE LIFE

MEDITATIONS ON THE BLESSED SACRAMENT IN RELATION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

BY THE
REV. JESSE BRETT, L.Th.
CHAPLAIN OF ALL SAINTS' HOSPITAL, EASTBOURNE
AUTHOR OF
"ANIMA CHRISTI," "THE BLESSED LIFE," "HUMILITY," ETC.

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PREFACE

These Meditations are intended for those who are able to follow a rule of frequent Communion.

Through regular devotion to their Lord, and attention to Him present in the Blessed Sacrament, such souls attain to great interior knowledge and love. The Heavenly Manna "containing within Itself all sweetness," enriches them and imparts to them the very joy of Christ. They go in the power of His Life "*from strength to strength;*" they mount up from grace to grace, as the spiritual life is realized in union with the Beloved. To them there will be nothing in the Meditations either new or strange. They will find very often that less has been stated and expressed than they have for themselves perceived and felt. This must be expected if we remember how manifold is the revelation of Divine Love; and these Meditations are to be taken only as helps from one who is himself but a disciple.

J. B.

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MEDITATION I

Of the Nature of the Blessed Sacrament

1. *KNOWING THE TRUTH*

In our duty towards the Blessed Sacrament we recognize our highest spiritual obligation. There is nothing formally required of us which stands so high in our spiritual life as our duty towards the Blessed Sacrament. In it we behold the Mystery of Divine Love. We touch the source and spring of our true life; we see the high destiny of the soul. To know the Truth is therefore of the very first importance to a devout soul. We know the circumstances of the Divine Institution, we accept as a matter of faith the statement, "*This is My Body . . This is My Blood.*" We acknowledge our obligation in respect of the commandment of our Lord, "*Do this.*" But this is not to be the limit of our knowledge of so great a mystery. This is indeed but the beginning, all-important certainly, since dogmatic precision defines the path of safety and keeps the mind from vain speculation; but above it, resting upon it, is a body of spiritual truth to be apprehended only in the growing experience of the soul. As day by day we come to the Presence

of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, we ought to be advancing into a knowledge of Him, very wonderful, intensely personal, and ever increasing.

Our Lord Himself has given us the fulness of teaching about the Blessed Sacrament in S. John vi. and xv.; but again, it is teaching which we must not merely discuss, but prove in our life. Such thoughts, for example, as that of dwelling in Him by virtue of the Holy Sacrament, or of immortality through His Body and Blood, are not for controversy, but for contemplation by the soul who is proving the fulness of His Love and Life in realized union with Him. Through the Blessed Sacrament the soul enters the region of fuller life in God, life within which her own powers find in proper scope their legitimate exercise. And this because through the Blessed Sacrament we are guided into that very condition of life which was the purpose of God from all Eternity to grant to us. Very wonderful is the vision presented to the soul. At first it is probably little more than spiritual illumination, itself both restful and encouraging, but definiteness comes with experience. We see the Divine relation of things and perceive the course of Truth in every ray of Divine Light, in every intuition of holiness. The knowledge thus gained is not vague, or indiscriminate. It is the knowledge of the soul's life in Christ the Beloved; the knowledge of powers and possessions in Him; the knowledge of facts which are eternal.

The Sacramental Life opens up possibilities of spiritual attainment which man at his best has ever sought to realize. Mystics of all ages have perceived them and trained themselves for their realization; and therein they expressed the deep feeling, the unerring instinct of the human soul longing for God. But it was the Incarnation which satisfied this spiritual longing. The Son of God—God and Man—realized in Himself the true desire of man for union with God. But more, He made that union with God possible through sacramental union with Himself.

The Christian who communicates without the definite purpose and intention of realizing a higher degree of union with God misses the secret of sacramental joy. If we come habitually and fail in that direct intention of entering into living relationship with our Lord, we do miss the great joy of our communions, because we have not apprehended that which was evidently our Lord's purpose in giving us that Holy Sacrament. It may be a result of ignorance, of very imperfect teaching. But that only emphasizes the point for which I am contending. We must seek to know the Truth not only as a matter of instruction, but through the certainty of experience. One earnest endeavour, one moment's intuition, will teach more of the Truth than a whole treatise of theology without the life-giving, light-giving experience of God in the Blessed Sacrament.

Oh, the great love of our Lord proclaimed in the Blessed Sacrament! What a mystery of union is that to which He calls His children! But oh! the coldness, the ignorance of our hearts! How often has He come to us and we have felt nothing! How often have we gone to Him, not seeking Him, not aspiring, not eager to know the secret of the Divine treasure of life stored for us in that spiritual Food of our souls! Is it given to us to see our defects? Is it given to us to perceive, ever so dimly, the life that in Him opens out to our souls? Then let us contemplate it. It is for us. It is life that is love in the fullest beauty of Divine activities. Yet with patience and with reverence let us tread that way. Eagerness must be tempered with a soberness born of penitence and humility; it must be tempered with reverent love and holy fear. But who shall say what may not be ours as we pursue the way of truth, of life, of love? What shall not be ours if we take up our communions, using to the full the knowledge gained by experience of Jesus Christ?

2. *THE SACRIFICE*

Consider the Sacrifice of Jesus. It was a Sacrifice eternally possible in the fact of His Divine Sonship. In Him the highest possibilities of love were reached and expressed. There was always in Him the perfect surrender of love. We must never think that the surrender of love was made by our Lord only in His Human Nature, for in

Him, as the Everlasting Son, that surrender was ever perfect. For a moment contemplate that love rising ever to the heights of the Eternal Purpose, ever uniting with the Father's Will, ever beholding the Cross, ever realizing the Eternal Priesthood, the Sacrifice, the Intercession. Think of all this as eternally before the Son, even before it was accomplished in Him! Then consider the Passion as the appointed expression of the Divine Love given in time, given for men. The Cross stands out clearly as the Altar of Atonement. Yes, indeed, but behind it, supporting it, exalting it, is the Eternity of Love. The High Priest is seen, the Offering is made, and then He withdraws to the Holy of Holies, continuing, completing the Atonement. His sacrifice upon the Cross gathers into itself all that went before in the God-ordained system of sacrifice. The old sacrifices cease, but His Own abides as a continuous act until He comes again. And since by that sacrifice He has redeemed man, there can be no repetition. But, for all that, the abiding character of His act and offering must be declared; and so He has given to His Church the authority to offer continually the memorial of His Own Offering.

The daily Sacrifice of the Church is not provided as a Divine concession to human feeling, or as an appeal to human sentiment. Sometimes, it is to be feared, people look on the daily Eucharist as, in some sort, a concession to a devotional feeling, a

devotional demand. It is something a great deal more, and grander than that. It is the expression on earth of the abiding character of that one Sacrifice, the one Oblation and Satisfaction which Jesus made. The daily Sacrifice becomes more a necessity as we realize this. Ceaselessly on earth, as in Heaven, the great Sacrifice is pleaded, for so the Church must "*show forth the Lord's death till He come.*"

We may understand the value of this ceaseless offering in three ways. (1) *In the Life of the Church.* Through it we can realize the dignity of the Church as the Body of Christ. Living with His Life, she is identified with Him in His Priestly work. The Sacraments severally declare this identification, but the Holy Eucharist goes beyond them all, in that it shows the highest function of the Church in union with her Priestly Head. It shows the Church in her Priestly character.

(2) *In the Progress of Spiritual Life.* Union with God in Christ is the purpose and desire of the soul in communion. "*He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him,*" says our Lord. This union can be no merely passive state. The indwelling of the Beloved by grace will be confirmed with every communion, and if we are faithful that interior Presence will be more wonderfully known in spiritual affection. S. Teresa has some useful teaching on that point.[1] If we

[1] S. Teresa's *Paternoster*, p. 76.

know this in any effective way, we cannot fail to value the perpetual offering; for since He reigns within, the love of our hearts unites with His, yea, is almost lost in His. We are one with Him, we love with His Love, even as we live with His Life. Our love is taken up into His ceaseless working. We feel our share in the movements of His Love. And a very wonderful and beautiful thing it is for us to realize. It is one of the joys of the Saints.

Think, moreover, of the effect of all this upon the soul, as we respond to daily demands, as we take up our Cross daily, and daily offer ourselves in sacrifice. How wondrously we shall prove the love of the Beloved! Our pain and distresses will be as nothing for the gladness which will fill us in the knowledge that we are more entirely His, and He supremely our own, in the sacrifice of Love. How tenderly the words of oblation will rise, "*Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee.*" Self, and everything that the self can suffer or do, is united with His Sacrifice—yea, a part of it, since the love which makes us strong is His Love in us, Himself in us.

(3) *In the Soul's Apprehension of the Beloved.* The Divine beauty of the Beloved grows plainer as we approach Him, as day by day the soul disposes herself to recognize Him in love. What is this beauty of Christ? We may answer—His Priestly

glory. This is the effulgence of His Love as He appears in the Priestly dignity of the Everlasting Son. In Heaven, as S. John saw Him, He stands in Priestly vesture. The soul can imagine nothing more glorious of her Beloved. In that Priestly glory there shines every grace, every ray of love and tenderness that can touch and satisfy the yearning hearts of His Own. But it is all shown in that perfect strength of Divine completeness which makes halting love or feeble sentiment worse than unworthy. When we come before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, there is a strength and completeness in His Love which rebukes in us all imperfection, all halting, all faulty weakness, and compels us to bring the very best we can, in order that we may correspond to some extent worthily with that manifested Love.

Daily as the Holy Sacrifice is offered, we should behold afresh the dignity of our Lord's Priestly glory, and let us remember, too, that we have been formed in the Divine Image, to wear that same dignity and glory of love. We shall develop it first in contemplation of Him, and then, also, in the life of union, wherein all our own conduct will be brought to the test of His Divine claim, as He impresses the solemn fact of His Own indwelling and calls us, through union, to a share full and rich and ennobling in His Own Sacrifice of Love. Day by day, as we come to the Blessed Sacrament, let us recognize that one fact, that just as It is the

memorial of our Lord's Own Great Sacrifice, as It takes us into active union with Him, so It reveals to us what is to be the character of our own life: a ceaseless offering through which our Lord will manifest afresh His Own Love before the world.

3. *COMMUNION*

Very wonderful is the truth of the Blessed Sacrament, and wonderful is the life of which It is the Centre. Beautiful is the knowledge of our participation in the Great Sacrifice which Jesus offered and still presents on behalf of men. But all this is made to rest in the act of communion, without which we cannot claim and take our proper place and share in the offering. We must be in active, vital union with our Lord, if we would rightly exercise our Priesthood in Him. It is not enough that we "hear Mass." That in itself does not make us properly to participate in the offering and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The value to our souls of such devotion depends upon our communion.

Consider this communion. "*Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you.*" "*He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.*" Herein is certainty of life and assurance of union. We must take these two thoughts separately—that of life and that of union.

(1) *Life.*—Life is not known in its truth apart

from "spirit." Life is of God, and "*God is Spirit.*" To know the meaning of life—yes, and in the highest sense also, the reality of life—we must know God, and in His Life find the full meaning of our own. Hence it is that we need the Blessed Sacrament. We need the closest possible communion with God in order rightly to understand the meaning of our own existence. To know God, to know His Life, to know that we were made to love Him: this is the joy of all true love.

This is not to be attained by merely regarding Him as distant, the Object of adoration merely, as though He were removed from all the concerns of our life; but by the inner experience of the soul whom He takes into the communion of life with Himself, by the knowledge gained through interior contemplation. Contemplate the simple act of communion. The absolved soul, humble, self-forgetting, loving, meets her Lord, her Beloved, and in one supremely tender moment, receives Him! He is within her, while yet His Life enfolds her. The Lord has come to His Temple, and His Glory fills it. Yes, and more than fills it; the glory which fills, makes itself apparent even in the outer concerns and work of life.

Behold this in yourself. Answer to His Presence with quickened love. Contemplate the fact, the mystery, the glory, the love of His Life which now inspires your own. As your love answers to His, so a Divine knowledge of life is given, not in

human language, scarcely even in human thought, but yet wholly understood by the soul. It is such knowledge as the Saints have possessed, unearthly and beyond the understanding of the worldly minded. The personal life is seen developing into the Divine and filled with delight in Heavenly realities and the beauties of His Life Who "*filleth all in all.*" And nothing short of this is to be understood as representing that which our Lord bestows upon us in communion; in fact, it would be impossible to convey by any known mode of thought that which our Lord is to the soul who receives Him. All language is inadequate to express it; every attempt to describe it must fall far short of reality. This is perhaps more than we can perceive in the early days of our communion, but as the spiritual life grows under the renewed gift of His Life, we become aware of that which is reserved for us in the Treasures of His Love. And always we must reach forward to that which remains.

Let us consider ourselves here. Are we in very deed, leaving those things which are behind, and reaching forward to that which He has to bestow? Do we receive Him with a "divine discontent," not satisfied as we are, but asking for the fulness of that which He alone can give while we train ourselves by love to receive it?

(2) *Union.*—Union grows naturally with deepening knowledge of life. We contemplate the beauty

of life in the Beloved, we feel its power, its freedom, but to do this at all perfectly is to realize that that Life is in ourselves, both as a Divine Gift and also as the bond of union. "*I will dwell in them and walk in them.*" At this point—for we are considering here the act of communion—we must try to understand the help of this union in the soul's act of oblation which we make at each Eucharist. "*Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies.*" Other considerations must come before us in later meditations. "*One with Christ and Christ with us,*"—there is the thought underlying our oblation. What power of holiness invests the offering we make! In Him we can plead the great Sacrifice, because the strong purpose of His Love has been imparted to us. We can with most loving confidence give ourselves to Him, for are we not held within the embrace of His Love? When we understand that our oblation is not made independently of His, but in and through His, it does make us more sensible of our own utter nothingness; but it exalts the dignity of human nature.

Sometimes the thought may come suggesting a doubt of His Love to ourselves. Can He love us; can we accept the assurance for ourselves; can we in our conscious nothingness be the object of His Love; can we accept that as a truth for our own guidance? If there has been careful preparation, followed by devout communion in loving

faithfulness, that Love is ours; for He is ours, and nothing can separate us. One with Christ! What a filling-up of our deficiencies! What a clothing of the soul in His beauty! Shall we not value each communion because of the enrichment of our spirit, which becomes more and more apparent, as in adoration the soul tries to see and understand the glory within the mystery of her communion?

In close communion with Him, He permits us to know the gain. He teaches us through the intimacy of His Own love to our souls, what He Himself is; and so communion becomes the joy of the waiting soul, and the realized Presence of the Beloved becomes the secret source of fervent desire. The more we advance into the true understanding of communion for our own selves, the more there springs up within the soul a true, a fervent desire for union with Him, though less for our own sake than for His glory.

4. *SPIRITUAL DESIRE*

"*The desire of our soul is to Thy Name.*" This point is a very important one. We may well consider it before we leave the thought of Sacrifice and Communion. With what desire and spiritual longings do we approach the Blessed Sacrament? Ours should be such a loving and pure desire as can only be traced to the grace of past communions; and Jesus alone the Object of those desires. "*Whom have I in Heaven but Thee; and there is none upon*

earth that I desire in comparison of Thee." The desire is not that which is born of the moment; rather it is that which is rooted in all our past experience of His love, His tenderness, His goodness, His grace. Is He our sole desire? Let us be careful; we are in danger of self-deception here. Our communions are times of great happiness, peace, restfulness in the Beloved. Are we generally eager for these consolations, without looking, as it were, through them to find Him? It is to be feared that sometimes this is the case. But we must look beyond these things. They are beautiful as tokens of His Love, rays of His Glory, delights of His Presence; and we are to use them and not to set them aside as of less value than our Lord intends them to be to us. Yet there is something beyond. The Beloved is more than His gifts, and as the soul grows in communion her desire will be more directly for Him. Within the sweetness of the consolation the soul becomes aware of a closer touch, a more subtle sense of spiritual contact, which fills her with a deeper joy. Her desire is more and more for this inner, secret grace, through which she is learning to know the Beloved. It is something more than the mere outward consolation of the soul herself; it is rather a secret joy, an intuitive perception of what our Lord is and what He is becoming to Her. It becomes the true intention of every communion.

No one can quite express the soul's desire at

this stage, for no one can express the Godward desire of the spirit. No one can express even to himself the deepest desires of his being, just because there are depths in the spiritual life beyond the soul's own consciousness, and within those depths there lives the desire which rises up to God in secret, yearning love. We can only say that, assisted by the Holy Ghost, she pours forth unutterable yearnings which only God can know and satisfy. As, however, the soul is enriched with the knowledge of the Beloved through loving communion, her desires tend towards a definite expression, she longs for the perfect revelation—the Beatific Vision. Nothing else satisfies her. Other things, other gifts, other revelations, assist, encourage, and for the time, in part, they satisfy; but they only exalt her the more in longing for the perfection of all. She is ever learning the mysteries of His Being and His Glory through natural beauties and spiritual manifestations; but all these do but increase her desire to "*see Him as He is.*"

Oh, if we are ever so desirous of the Vision, let us exercise ourselves in patience. We not yet have our heart's desire. We may have to face many a trial, and, greatest of all, the hiding of the Face we love. It may happen to us that our desire grows into positive pain—pain that is beyond all earthly remedy; if so, let us remember that He is faithful, and will not ask us to wait

too long for the glory of His open Presence. That pain must come to a certain extent, as the soul develops in love. The soul cannot be perfectly filled with love and have no pain. The pain of love is of all things the most wonderful the soul can endure, but nothing is more precious. The longing to behold the Beloved is in some cases so intense that souls suffer interiorly to a degree which cannot be told; but their active sympathy with their Lord results in the purest joy they can know on earth. It is the joy of the Sacred Heart.

A practical value attaches to this part of our meditation, viz. the importance of every effort to make our communions times of direct contact in spirit with the Beloved. What earnestness, what carefulness, should be ours! What steadfast training of the soul so that every desire may be directed to Him in love, seeking the satisfaction of all in Him. If it be the duty of each to "*know the Truth*," it is no less a duty to correspond with it. In fact, it is only through faithful correspondence with truth as we come to know it, that we can properly be said to know it at all. The knowledge of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament cannot be reached in the exactness of a definition. Certainly the truth, as we receive it in words, should be exactly stated; but beyond words lies the knowledge which is gained by love in personal communion with the Beloved. And that is the

knowledge of the Saints. It is not a knowledge which depends in the least degree upon mere intellectual qualifications; it is a knowledge that is attained by love alone; it is essential, substantial knowledge, imparted to the spirit within the substance of its being. It is in His Presence, realized within as the joy of communion, that we may test all truth. "*In Thy Light shall we see light.*" In that Presence we discover higher ways of life in which the Truth is perceived in deepening rays of Divine glory and beauty—ways of life in which we find peace and gladness.

Let us examine ourselves here at this point. What is our life as communicants? Is it growing more and more into the perfect knowledge of the Beloved? Is it more and more the gathering and hallowing of all desire in the pure intention of knowing Him? Love seeks to know. Love is not content until it knows all that can be known of the Beloved. Is the knowledge which we possess of Him growing daily through the consciousness of our union with Him? Let us pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit may breathe within us, quickening every holy desire; yea, that He may so breathe through our soul that these desires may rise to the Beloved, well pleasing to Him. Then shall we know the joy of His loving satisfaction. We shall know it according to the degree fitting for this life, and the satisfaction of the present will contain within it the undying sense of that which is to come.

MEDITATION II

Of Obedience

1. *THE SCOPE OF OBEDIENCE*

If it be right to assume that any commandment of our Lord is of greater importance than another, it must be assumed of this command, "*This do in remembrance of Me.*" "Do this for a Memorial of Me." It is concerned with something higher than moral duties and obligations. This command is spiritual in its intention, and the consequences of obedience are eternal. Obedience, therefore, to the command can be no formal act, but an effort of the individual that shall be in aim, at least, worthy of the Divine Intention, worthy of the Love of the Redeemer. It should be an act into which the whole of our being is engaged, an act to which we bring all our powers. "*Do this.*" As those words speak to us from the very eve of the Passion, and we try to understand the fulness of their meaning in the Blessed Sacrament, as the One Memorial, it seems to us impossible to pay due regard to the whole without the most earnest meditation upon the mind and will of our Lord; because we can

only render our obedience as we understand His mind in His obedience to the will of the Father.

Consider, then, the Holy Will of Jesus in the Sacrifice of the Cross. He gave expression to that which had been from the beginning the Will of God concerning the sin of man. Sin stood in the way of His highest purpose of love towards man; and so sin had to be dealt with in order that man should not lose his predestined glory. With what sorrow of heart, with what determination and strength of love did He offer Himself, rising in that love triumphantly through sacrifice and death. Contemplate that death of deaths with all that it involved for Him, and then remember, "*As often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come.*" We show forth His Death in the ritual of the Altar, but that ritual must not be allowed to lack the spirit through which alone the memorial is perfected. Our obedience needs to be that of the spirit in the effort of love to deal with the sin of life and with all that hinders communion with God. Preparation becomes the serious work of the soul. Between the preparation with its sorrow and its pain, and communion with its joy and its rest, the distance is short indeed. The joy of the Beloved, the rest and peace of His Life, are quickly experienced by the devout and prepared soul; she finds the Spirit of Jesus in the very work of obedience, her joy begins in communion with

His sorrow, and increases in the joy of His acceptance.

But further, in His Passion our Lord entered into closest relation with souls in all that makes up the suffering of life—bodily and spiritual suffering; He consecrated it all to the highest service of love; and so truly that in Him they suffer most who love most. We must, therefore, see in the Blessed Sacrament the way to the sympathy of the Beloved through the communion of suffering; and it is not by any means a difficult matter for souls thus to prove that wonderful power of sympathy in the Lord. Our preparation for communion should therefore include the direction of the soul in the way of sacrifice. She makes her sacrifice in various ways, and communion should be accompanied with an act of love, not merely accepting pain and sorrow, but making them the natural means for the offering of perfect devotion. Our obedience will become most truly the offering of the *self*, an offering which must be renewed as often as the *self* seeks expression. Again, in the Blessed Sacrament our Lord gives Himself. We need, therefore, to contemplate the Gift and estimate our own deep happiness in communion. "*Do this*"—our obedience must surely embrace and include a ready correspondence with the wondrous Love of God. True obedience comes to be the point and effect of very holy care, very loving determination on the part of the soul who desires to correspond

with the mind and will and love of her Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. And where there is this holy obedience He is ever found with His consolation, imparting the knowledge of Himself through the soul's most secret experience and guiding towards more perfect union. In this we attain to the purest joy of communion. But let us not mistake the foundation of this joy.

Very high, very beautiful are the manifestations of His Love to the Bride-Soul; but the highest are given to that one who has known Him best in the ways of penitence, of humility, and of sacrifice, for that one is nearest to Him who finds her first joy in the union of the Cross. "*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*"

2. *THE BODY*

Perfect obedience is the service of the whole man, body, soul, and spirit. No part of ourselves can be left out, or neglected, if we desire to offer a true obedience to the command of the Lord, "*Do this.*" The Christian Sacrifice cannot stand upon a lower level than those of the older, Jewish Covenant. If under the Old Law the care and preparation of the body was necessary to a right participation in the Sacrifice, still more are we to recognize the necessity. The special sanctity which clothes the body of the Christian can surely not exempt him from particular care respecting it. The

body of the Christian "*is the Temple of the Holy Ghost,*" and therefore is fitted to become the instrument of His Divine working. As the soul and spirit of man are controlled by the Spirit of God, so there is required a peculiar fitness in the body, that the soul and spirit may not be hindered in their activities. The body must be held in subjection to the superior will, as S. Paul said of himself, "*I keep under my body and bring it into subjection.*" Hence the need for wise mortification, due custody of the senses, self-control, that the body, sustained and healthful, may be always obedient and responsive to the higher demands of soul and spirit, always ready to contribute to the perfect worship of the whole man.

We contemplate the Holy and Immaculate Body of our Lord, so sensitive to the slightest motion of the spirit, that He could say, "*I do always those things that please Him.*" It is through the deeds of the body that good and evil impulses alike find modes of expression. It is therefore needful, if we would be perfectly trained in obedience, that the body should be made obedient. In this lies very much of our care in preparation for communion, the bringing of all into obedience to the higher law of spirit. And we are not to assume that we are at any time free from that necessity. The proper government of the body is always necessary to true attainment in the spiritual life. What glory invests the human body through the Incarnation!

And that glory is increased where there is faithful use of the Sacraments. The Sacraments seem to impart to us an ever-increasing measure of the glory of Christ. True, we apprehend that glory spiritually; but from the soul it passes to the body and invests it with supernatural beauty. This is true of all spiritual experience; the body is affected with joy or pain, as the spirit is moved and influenced by the Divine operation.

Very beautiful is this intimate connection between the body and the spiritual nature; it is the beginning of that eternal gladness which will grace the Resurrection Body. Speaking of the effect of the Blessed Sacrament, our Lord said, "*Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.*" Seeing, then, that our bodies are being fitted for the Resurrection through our communions, with what carefulness shall we govern them, that in them hereafter may be seen in its fulness the glory of the Risen Life, the sacramental glory of Christ in us! Surely in days like these, when materialistic teaching would rob us of that comfort of the Catholic Faith, "I believe in the Resurrection of the Body," we ought most especially to offer our bodies in obedience, and so learn the truth of that glory which is ours through the Incarnation, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord. Sustained by the Sacraments, hallowed by the sacred Sign, consecrated by the living touch of

God, the body of the Christian is holy, and as holy is committed to the keeping of God in the darkness of the grave, whence He will raise it again, a spiritual body, glorious with the beauty of the Beloved. Oh, not till we are raised, and in the perfection of our nature are called up to Him, shall we fully realize what our bodies are, and what is the fruit of the Sacraments in them.

We may note here the value of simplicity and detachment. The artificial ways of modern life are opposed to the best view to the sanctity of the body. Our duty is indeed rendered difficult, for we have to assert the spiritual as against the material view of human life. The body is necessary to the ordinary working of the soul, and therefore we cannot be too careful to avoid whatever will render the body unfit to be the instrument of the soul in her special activities. This is the particular duty of every one, especially of those who are called to the Religious state. But there seems to be in the world an unnecessary distinction drawn between the Religious and Secular life. People are willing to accept certain rules of life, certain degrees of devotion, as quite right and proper for those in Religion; but think themselves excused from practices which would approach perfection. And yet, is it not true to say that there is nothing abnormal in the Religious Life? Does it not represent the most perfect mode of life? Regarded from the spiritual side,

does not the Religious Life present before the world the very Ideal of bodily and of spiritual life, in order that there may be the complete sanctification of the whole being? At any rate, it does behove those who know what a separated life means, to show it forth so beautifully, so simply, and yet so strongly, that the world may understand what is the best.

Simplicity, detachment—are these gaining favour with us as we go forward? Do we consider the place which they should have with us when we are preparing to obey the command of Christ, "*Do this*"? Is our obedience the offering of the service of the body, together with the soul and spirit? Can we otherwise regard our offering as a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice? Certainly those who are called to the Religious Life have that one great opportunity, they can bring most perfectly that offering of the whole being, and therefore there is presented by them the highest ideal of obedience, and through that is shown forth the ideal of sanctity.

But let no unfair distinction be drawn between Religious and Secular vocations. Both are means to sanctification. The high standard of the Religious Life might well encourage us all in spiritual ways. What is needed in most cases is a definite spiritual aim, a purpose in life to be realized in holiness. We should then attain to greater simplicity of life and to truer social ideals.

3. *THE SOUL*

The Bride-Soul prepares herself in obedience to the Beloved. The act of communion is to her so wonderful, that all her powers need to be specially trained that her obedience may be complete in the perfect showing of her love. Her preparation for communion becomes more and more an interior work as in the Blessed Sacrament she realizes her exaltation and advances in the life of union with the Beloved. Again, her preparation is made in view of that high obedience which she seeks evermore to render to her Beloved Whose commands are appeals to her love. She will feel with S. Teresa that "God was pleased to supply us with a Food so substantial and Heavenly in order that we might be thereby strengthened to execute perfectly the Divine Will."[1] Consider, therefore, how the soul may expect to be strengthened, and then consider how she must be prepared in her obedience. In the act of communion she receives her Lord, Who gives Himself that He may abide with her. Think how all the powers of the soul lie open to His gaze. His Face is towards the soul's secret life. The understanding, the memory, the will, may all be turned, as it were, to Him in the simple intention of love, the understanding to be enlightened with His Divinity, the will to be filled with the Divine

[1] S. Teresa's *Paternoster*, p. 249.

Love, and the memory with Divine possession of glory.[1] There is in every good communion a meeting of the Bride-Soul with her Beloved. The soul and spirit of the communicant are brought into contact with the Soul and Divinity of Jesus. Not less than this can be the truth about the Blessed Eucharist. This blessing itself may be indefinitely increased as the soul advances in love and holiness; but in a real sense it is true of every good communion. With what care shall we seek to obey our Lord's command, "*Do this.*" We shall direct the powers of the soul to that end, disposing ourselves to receive His blessing.

But this disposition of the self with all its powers is no easy matter. It seems so very simple when we merely state the fact; but what discipline and care of the understanding is needed! The mind is attracted to many things, to many departments of knowledge, and is interested in many pleasing movements of life in the world. How easy it is to become engrossed and absorbed in these things, and then to justify ourselves by assuming that secular and spiritual knowledge, or interests, may be rigidly separated. But such an assumption must always lead to loss on the spiritual side. All legitimate knowledge, all proper interests, should increase our knowledge of God and our experience of His Love We are taught the Divine Wisdom through daily

[1] Cf. S. John of the Cross, *S. C.*, xix. 3.

experience and the faithful discharge of every duty; and the understanding knows no higher delight than that which flows from the Divine illumination, the finding of God in everything, and everything in God. There is nothing upon which we can rightly exercise our understanding, in which we may not find God, and feel we are storing up in our minds that which will help us in our time of prayer. So, too, the memory may keep the joy of holy, interior consciousness in the possession of glory.

And one point is here of importance; we should seek to retain every Divine impression by obedience to every motion of the Holy Spirit. And with regard to evil impressions, hurtful memories, we are to seek by His aid to be purged from them, in order that the immediate sense should ever be of God in the pureness of His glory.

The will needs to be made strong through the Divine Love, that the whole intention of the soul may be Divine. That is not advancing too much, for as we are strengthened in will by the gift of the Divine Love, so more and more the intention of the soul through the will becomes Divine. Contemplate the Soul of Jesus. How the three powers in Him united in that perfect sense of the human ideal of what man should be before God. "*I do always those things that please Him.*"

What an Ideal! Never to deviate for a moment from that high standpoint—pleasing the Father!

The human soul may meet the look of God, and in all her powers answer alike to the demand and the glory of His Holiness! What a thought for us as we try to prepare for the Blessed Sacrament in loving obedience! He comes Himself to lead us to the ideal of His Own perfect Humanity. In obedience we control and mortify the body, bringing it "*into subjection*" to the superior will. There ought to be, therefore, no hindrance of the lower nature to the higher determination of the soul to be disciplined and controlled in all her powers. And the more perfectly we exercise ourselves in this thing, the more marvellously shall we find love growing within the soul, making that higher ideal of humanity more possible, because there can be nothing pleasing in the sight of God which is not inspired by love.

The ultimate desire of the Bride-Soul is union with her Beloved. He in His tender love will guide her, and by holy discipline detach her from all that is against her progress. We have to recognize the highest. Nothing can exceed the glory of the soul in perfect union with Christ; we have therefore to employ all our powers in loving co-operation with the will of God. Our Communions will become occasions of deep and serious joy. Our Lord Himself will guide us to the joy of His Own glorious Humanity, transforming us in love. He will impart this joy to the soul who looks to Him in the expectation of love. May He indeed

so guide our love in the ways of perfect response to His Own, as to hasten the day of the soul's perfect happiness and glory, the day of perfect union.

4. *THE SPIRIT*

As we proceed to the more interior ways of the spirit, the duty of obedience is concerned with the highest movements of which we are capable. Our contact with God in the Blessed Sacrament is ultimately a contact of spirit. The words of our Lord concerning the Blessed Sacrament were declared by Himself to be "*spirit*" and "*life*." The Blessed Sacrament Itself, therefore, must stand in Its essential character as spiritual. Our obedience, therefore, passes beyond the formal act of communion, and becomes the strong loving movement of spirit seeking the Divine. And we touch the Divine. It is not too much to say that, however much we may obscure the truth through our own forgetfulness, in every communion we touch the Divine. We know it in those times of interior light and joy of union, when our knowledge of God and of our own life in Him is deep and substantial, and though holding all the senses in gladness, yet goes beyond them. Or better, in the times when, as is the case with some souls, this knowledge is so interior as to be beyond even the ordinary powers of sense. There are spiritual experiences to which souls are, for however brief a period, sometimes raised, when all the outward senses are closed and the soul is

utterly forgetful of others and only conscious of God. Then this which I have spoken of is true, our own life in Him is realized as deep and substantial. We are touched by Divinity. In that highest part of our nature, our spirit, we experience the healing, renewing touch of God. Give this fact of our communions its own place in all our thoughts and efforts in preparation and obedience, and how changed is our spiritual attitude towards the Blessed Sacrament. We regard it not as a mere act in our religious routine, but as that which our Lord intended it should be, the means of the highest, most intimate approach to Himself. There is no listlessness, no slowness, but a holy eagerness of love as we seek the touch of the Beloved. And the soul that can ascend, or rather, the soul that is thus led upwards to Him, may even dare to take the words of the Bride in the Canticle and make them her own, "*Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.*" So we may rely upon our Lord to meet us with His love in the desire of our hearts.

A movement of love so interior as this is easily obscured. Such is the power of even small things of the world, that they can effectually hinder communion and make the finer degrees of spiritual experience impossible. The greater our detachment, the greater is our joy in the Beloved and the more prepared is the spirit for His touch. The pathway of true obedience lies upward through mortification and detachment to the height of

spiritual aspiration where, exercised in love alone, we may anticipate the perfect joy of the Saints—"*My Beloved is Mine, and I am His.*"

See how our Lord encourages the faithful in obedience. "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock.*" That summons is His call to obedience, oft repeated in His tender love; for He wills that His purpose should not fail towards any one. "*If any man hear My Voice and open the door*"—there is the act of obedience; the open door is the heart prepared in obedience—"*I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.*" There is communion; there is the mutual joy of the Bride and the Bridegroom. How careful our Lord is to show that the joy is on His part as well as on ours! It is that mutual action which makes the joy. The Bride rejoices in the Beloved and He in her. Oh, to what a height of glory does He not exalt our acts of obedience! He makes them to be nothing less than the intimate movements of love wherein He Himself rejoices while He opens to us the riches of His Own Love.

But notice how this, which we may know here in union with our Lord, agrees with the joy of that fruition of God which is to be the eternal portion of the Saints. In that Heavenly order there will continue to be the participation of the Saints in the Love of the Beloved. This is shown in the frequent allusion to the "*Water of Life.*" "*I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain*

of the water of life freely" (Rev. xxi. 6).[1] This water is "the very Love of God Himself." In the union with the Beloved which the Bride enjoys now, she knows something of this joy. "This water flows into the soul, so that it drinks of the torrent of love which is the Spirit of the Bridegroom infused into the soul in union."[2] What, then, must be the delight of that everlasting refreshment which we may expect when the obedience of earth has been perfected; when the gift of Christ has been increased to the utmost of our power to receive It; when, understanding through the experience of time, what the eternal showing of His Love must be, we pass to that long-expected joy, the joy of the Beatific Vision? If in this life the spirit knows the joy of the Divine Life beyond all power of language to express, what will there be the joy of union perfected in the very strength of the Divine Love for ever?

We can permit ourselves in quiet meditation to dwell on a thought like that. But we must do more; we must bring it to the sanctuary, and find in our Eucharists the meeting-point between Time and Eternity, Earth and Heaven, the present and the eternal glory of the future. It is in that Divine Sacrament that our Lord brings home to us the oneness of our life in Him. He imparts to us

[1] See also Rev. xxii. 1 and 17.
[2] S. John of the Cross, *S. C.*, xxvi., note.

then the treasure of life—life which afterwards He reveals more perfectly within. Hence it is seldom possible for us in the act of communion wholly to realize the wonder of the moment. It is only afterwards when alone with our Lord, meditating, as it were, within the sanctuary of our own being, that we can fully perceive the treasure of love committed to us. But what joy should be ours when the fact is perceived within ourselves!

Such, then, is what we expect as the fulfilment of all that our Lord promises in the Blessed Sacrament. May we not hope henceforth to realize more what will be the eternal fruit of loving obedience? Love is its beginning, its continuance, and its reward. He Who commands is He also Whom we look for as the end and crown of our love. So we come back to the thought with which we began, that all obedience becomes nothing else than an act of love. When we are conscious that obedience is hard, we are thereby only shown within ourselves that love is not perfect. So, then, every act of obedience must be made an act of love; the habit of obedience becomes the habit of love, and the habit of love develops into the perfected character of the saint.

MEDITATION III

Of the Real Presence

1. *THE DIVINE HUMILITY*

When we try to meditate upon the Most High God, and contemplate the perfection of the Divine Nature, we see that there is no grace or virtue wanting in the harmony of His life; nothing is wanting in the perfection of His Glory and Majesty. We look up to find in Him, as the Fount and Source of all goodness, the very graces which contribute to our own sanctification. The Glory of God is before all things spiritual, and is to be apprehended spiritually. Yet because of the singleness and simplicity of the Divine Life, the love which is its eternal force is manifested in ways which we can best understand in their relation to spiritual movements within ourselves. Thus in one way He declares His Love in Humility—Divine Humility—the spiritual glory of the act shining forth as its tender grace is perceived. The Incarnation was the Divine manifestation of love in most perfect lowliness.

We may speak of the Divine condescension in the Incarnation; but does that express the

inner truth of that great mystery? We have to recognize that being an act of love, there was a special fitness in the humility which characterized that act; we may say it was natural to the Divine Love so to declare itself. The perfect lowliness magnifies the love. We see it in the earthly life of Jesus. Love in Him was felt through the meekness and tenderness, through the "*gracious words*" which proceeded from Him, through the lowly self-surrender which marked all His actions on our behalf. But this does not end with the Cross. This condescension, this humility, this lowliness, must be looked for in every meeting of God with man. He gives us therein the very ground of confident approach, and also a revelation of His glory suited to our present weakness. Every purpose of God with regard to us is conceived in tenderness; He will not overpower us with the vision of His glory, but, meeting us in lowliness, lead us in the way that has no ending save in the Beatific Vision.

So our Lord meets us in the Blessed Sacrament; it is there He gives His Presence. No act of lowliness can be imagined that is more wonderful than that of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. So wonderful is the humility of that Divine Presence, that many perceive It not; and when we persuade ourselves that we do perceive It, is there not much more in that wonderful humility than we have yet understood? Its very wonder is beyond our power to penetrate. "*This is My Body* . . .

My Blood." This statement, with all His Own teaching about the reality of the Sacramental Gift, declares the truth of His Presence. Some there are who do not perceive It; but the loving soul, strong in faith and interiorly enlightened, perceives It and rejoices in the Wisdom of God. She finds in It a depth of love, and a revelation in light which leads her on. It is, as it were, a continuous education of the soul in the ways of God.

Contemplate the Divine Humility in the Blessed Sacrament. Outwardly we see but the Consecrated Species, but within there lies the whole mystery of love conveyed in the words, "*This is My Body . . . This is My Blood.*" What veiling of greatness, what hiding of power! It is the gift of the Highest in the lowest. Our Divine Lord veils His Majesty, that He may meet us in our poverty, and win us in lowliness, and make us partakers of His glory.

But this Divine Humility is also His declaration to souls of the way to the highest. He comes in lowliness, and we must meet Him in that same spirit if we would find the joy of communion. It is just that which we should really try and impress upon ourselves; the necessity of meeting our Lord in a spirit corresponding to His Own. We are not always able to rejoice fully in His Sacred Presence; our spiritual perception is not always clear and true. We are sometimes restless, easily wearied. Well, there may be other causes at work, but that which directly concerns us is the state of our own

souls. Are we meeting Him in His Own way? Does He come to us in lowliness, meekness, humility, and find in us the obstruction of pride, self-love, self-seeking? Are we coming to Him with all that simplicity, and singleness of heart, and purity of devotion which belong to perfect humility? If we would in Him attain to the highest, we need the grace of humility. Humility is the garb of sanctity. There is no perfect sanctity where there is not perfect humility. With it our Lord clothed Himself in Humanity, with it He clothes Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, with it He clothes the souls in whom His Life is manifested. The workings of God are often secret, and sometimes they are greatest when most hidden. This is to be remembered in contemplation of the Real Presence; and it is to be remembered also in the spiritual life of the individual. It is not too much to say that in humility we should seek to hide the deep ways of God within ourselves, lest in vain glory we lose the sweetness of His gift.

We must not pride ourselves on the gifts of God; we must receive them, recognize them, rejoice in them; but the moment a vain thought crosses our minds on account of them, we are spoiling His gifts. Let us cast over them the veil of humility.

Veiled in humility, the glory of the Real Presence, with the power of the living Christ active in the Blessed Sacrament, is perceived by

the Holy Angels, as they in purity of spirit apprehend something of the Mystery of Love; though they do not apprehend it wholly, since it is perceived only in its Divine intensity within the very Being of God. So wonderful is the humility of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament that it is not understood; it is not perceived in its fulness outside the Divine Life itself.

Clothed in humility, the soul, into which the Divine Life is received, remains hidden from the world. "*The King's daughter is all glorious within*," where the Beloved delights in the graces with which she is endowed. And yet more, there is a glory of the Divine Presence, hidden even from herself in the depths of her being. Beyond the range of sensible delight is the calm peace and rest of the spirit in union with God. But it is the robe of humility which hides her from the world in her union with God; there she is kept in safety. "*Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine Own Presence from the provoking of all men.*"

2. *THE SOUL'S EXALTATION*

From all Eternity God willed to exalt man as His child. When sin had been introduced and immediate exaltation rendered impossible, He provided for the special presentation of the truth of His Will, first guiding the course of early sacrificial teaching to the higher thought of communion with Himself. As, for instance, when He

ordained the Peace-Offering, which seems to have been, so far as the Jews were concerned, a special enactment, consecrating to the highest uses that which had become a part of heathen rites. All sacrifices of the heathen were regarded from the social side, and were, more or less, feasts with the particular deity; and in the Peace-Offering God seems to have preserved and consecrated some special features of the feasts of other nations. He first guided the course of early sacrificial teaching to the higher thought of communion with Himself, and then, in the order and symbolism of the Tabernacle, pointed the way to the Presence of God, which would, in the course of ages, be the privilege of all. The High Priest entered the Holy of Holies, where God was, once a year, as the representative of the people. Our High Priest, Jesus, has ascended to the Holy Place, "*not made with hands*," and thither He leads His Own. "He has opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers." Further, in His Transfiguration, our Lord showed how He would lead men into the Divine Presence —the Divine Life.

In the Blessed Sacrament we are to recognize this Will of God in our exaltation. There is no dignity so great as that to which the soul attains in union and communion with God, and she can have no holier or nobler desire than to attain to perfect union with Him. Consider, then, the Real Presence of our Lord in the Blessed

Sacrament, in this connection. We are brought to His Feet, we are held within the compass of His Glory.

We may, indeed, be reminded here that Heaven is the Throne of God, the true sphere of His Glory. "*Heaven is My Throne*," He says. Yes, but more than that, "*Earth is My Footstool.*" Earth and Heaven are united in the manifestation of His Kingly Majesty. But we are not only thus brought within His Glory, we are made "*partakers of the Divine Nature.*" The glory not only encompasses us, but is imparted to us to be sacramentally the principle of our final glory in Heaven. Indeed, we cannot appreciate the glory of the Presence, except He lead us into it, and be Himself the Life through which we can understand it.

A practical point is here presented. The faithful are learning to value the privilege of non-communicating attendance, as it is called. It is not a happy expression, but it is the one in vogue, and so we venture to use it. There is great happiness for the soul who can rest day by day thus in the Sacred Presence and worship her Lord. We sometimes find people saying such things as this: "I find so much help in being present at Mass; I seem hardly to care to make my communion. If, indeed, I do make my communion, it seems to me no more than the other."

It is certainly a most mistaken view. The power to worship, the power to understand the

Presence of God in the Blessed Sacrament, to receive the good from day to day, lies in the fact of careful communion. They who so seek their Lord need the greater care, if that be possible, to make good communions; for apart from them there is a loss of power to perceive and respond to the revelation of love in the Real Presence. In the light of God alone can we see the deeper revelations of His glory. There is a true exaltation of the soul in being thus brought within the Divine Presence, and what a lasting effect should be looked for! Think of any one coming thus day by day, leaving all the distractions and harsh voices of the world, for the peace of His Presence; leaving all pride for the humility of His showing; leaving the world for Heaven. Such a soul would grow more and more into His likeness, and would become exalted through humility and detachment, filled up, as it were, out of His fulness and glory, because herself emptied of all selfishness and self-seeking. How wonderful is that exaltation which is attained through lowliness and humility! It is the exaltation of the Bride-Soul in contemplation of the Beloved. Her gaze is wholly withdrawn from the things of sense which minister only to self-satisfaction, and directed in simplicity to Him; and He, because of that simplicity, communicates Himself in most intimate ways, so that the soul's powers are quickened beneath His look of love. Being thus quickened in all her powers, the soul is

made ready for the contemplation of the life of the Beloved.

And here notice the dignity of the soul exalted in contemplation of His Life. We may speak of it as the dignity of pure being, far enough removed from any assertion of pride, for it can only be understood, or reached, through humility; the greater the humility the holier the dignity, because of the fuller revelation which is possible. "*God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*" Such worship is wholly divested of earthly pride, and requires for its perfection great pureness of love.

With what carefulness, then, should we seek purity and humility and detachment of spirit, that we may approach Him spirit to Spirit! But in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament this necessity for spiritual purity is ever felt.

Consider the occasions when we have felt no special good in being present. There have been times, perhaps, when we have not felt particularly benefited by being present at Mass; there have even been times when we have not been specially conscious of blessing in communion itself. And then how unspiritual we have felt; how cold, formal, worldly, and self-contained! Again, the converse is equally true; our most spiritual seasons have been also times of self-forgetfulness, of simplicity and lowliness. When our Lord has manifested His Presence to us, made us feel that

He was there with us, has it not been on a day when we were humble? when we were specially lowly and self-forgetting?

I would plead for greater care in order that, not only at times of communion we exercise ourselves in higher spiritual action, but also that we may do so when assisting at Mass. That pure and holy sense of His Presence, which the devout soul will always experience, leads to the realization of our own exaltation. We feel our spiritual greatness in the ever-widening vision of life in God. And ever as the mystery and beauty of the Divine Life is unfolded to us, our souls become proficient in Holy Wisdom, the Science of the Saints.

The soul nourished and sustained by her communion is prepared for the contemplation of the Life of God, and so doing she is but acting according to His Will Who has communicated Himself to her. She moves more and more familiarly among the things of God, and yet not carelessly; the Spirit of Holy Fear guides her to acts of tenderest reverence amidst the increasing wonders of her joy. She seeks her own in giving glory to her Beloved, while He, mindful of her love and ministering fresh graces as her spiritual beauty develops, rejoices with her, in her.

This interior joy is altogether apart from the concerns of the outer life and the bodily senses. It is too deep, too entirely of God and with God, to be very much affected by any outward thing. And

then there is gladness of soul. And how glad the soul may become! Her joy in Christ is quite apart from any joy the world can give; beside it the excitement and charm of the world fall away into utter insignificance. What are they to one who knows the Love of Christ? What are they to one who knows the power and grace of the Beloved? They are nothing save as they suggest to her what He is, and lead to some higher sense of the Divine Beauty. They are to be used, if they are things of nature, as helps, but not to be rested in. And if they are mere matters of earthly attraction, the sooner we are separated from them the better; and being separated from them by the Love of God in us, let us never mourn when they have departed from us, but rather rejoice that we are free.

3. *THE SPHERE OF REST*

One of the most beautiful of spiritual perceptions is that of the restfulness of the Divine Life. To have perceived it, to have felt it, to have been ourselves refreshed and rested within it, is to have known that, the very memory of which is an enduring joy. We may seem to have lost the actual sense of it, but the memory of it must abide continually. It is so contrary to our every-day experience of the world. Here we are accustomed to ways of life which, whatever else they may be, are not restful; and too often we acquiesce and let ourselves be carried away with them, until we find

ourselves even seeking excitement, disliking to be quiet or alone.

But when we turn to the Life of God, all is restfulness, all is peace. There is, of course, the eternal energy of His Being, Who upholdeth all things. But in the working of His perfect Will, there is peace, rest. In all that is revealed of His Life through the visions granted to prophets and saints of old, how restful is His Majesty! Beneath all that has been revealed of activity, of glory, of worship in His Presence, there is the restfulness of the essential Life of God. And into that perfect rest of perfect life He will bring all things at last. We could not for a moment suppose that the restlessness of life around us belongs in any enduring sense to us or to God. He will bring all things at last into His Own perfect rest. And so S. John says, with the vision fresh before him, "*there was no more sea*"—all that suggests restlessness must pass away and give place to abiding calmness. The ideal of spiritual life on earth and in Heaven is ever above the restlessness of time, of passion, and ambition—of time with its changes, of passion with its impulses, of ambition with its disappointments. All must pass away and leave only that in which the soul can permanently rejoice—the Divine Life.

The Divine Life is therefore the sphere of rest within which we may abide; and we may abide in that rest now, as well as hereafter. Wherever

that Life extends there is rest; and so the Real Presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament brings that rest to us. Responding truly in faith and love, we find that rest. "*Come unto Me . . . I will give you rest.*" And the soul that can leave the distractions of this present life, and be really lost to herself in the Real Presence of her Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, finds an infinite rest. In order to be able so to rest in our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament, we need to be definitely seeking to rest in Him at other times in the interior ways of Prayer. Resting in Him must become the habit of the soul, and not merely an occasional experience, though, indeed, there will be times of more particular enjoyment of His rest. We need by interior acts, in the midst of the exactions of the hour, to rest always in His Presence—a Presence we understand and feel as we are perfected in the practice of Recollection. I repeat, we need to be definitely seeking to rest in Him; that is, the understanding must be occupied with Divine Wisdom, the memory absorbed in the consciousness of His Life, the will concerned only with His Will, since "His Will is our peace."

Such complete occupation of the soul, in all that belongs to her Lord, leads to great restfulness through detachment from all earthly things which excite her to her own harm. Our Lord Himself visits such souls with wonderful moments of interior refreshment. He leads them to perfect

restfulness in the knowledge of their union with Himself. *"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?"* Who, indeed, but the soul that in detachment has found in Him the rest which is both the interior joy and the outward confidence of love? Who but that soul who through communion has entered into the rest of the Sacred Heart of her Lord? It is for us to prove this as the after experience of our communions; and as we prove it, let us pray to continue in it to the praise of His Love.

There is a further experience of this perfect rest, which is not always quite understood. When the soul has successfully resisted and overcome amid the trials of darkness and aridity, and has been exalted in spiritual joy, it seems sometimes that she falls back again—not, indeed, to the old experience of darkness and dryness, but to a state in which there seems no distinct perception either of light or leading from God. It has been described rather as a condition of spiritual twilight—neither light nor dark. There is just enough light for the soul to be encouraged, but not enough to exalt her. She should not be too eager in her desire to secure some apparently higher experience. She is already so far advanced that she may well abide with patience as she is, knowing that for the present it is better for her; sooner or later there will be an awakening Godward in joy and fervent love, and then she will understand why she has been led to

this particular experience. Meanwhile, to rest in His Presence, secure in the knowledge that He is with her, is the soul's wisest action. It would be fatal to become impatient, or to force the soul beyond her power at such a time. It seems that our Lord brings the soul into that state in order that she may know what it is to be quietly at rest.

We do need at times so to rest, in order to gain strength. Such resting must be the humble, yet very loving, act of our souls, consciously abiding in Him, and resisting all attractions from without, and what is harder still, all impatience from within. We must wait upon the Will of God.

To come day by day into the Presence of our Lord, with all the hope, all the patient love, all the gladness of soul of which we have been thinking, is the greatest rest we can ask for, apart from actual communion; and even then the value is proved even more, we can exercise our souls in the virtues through which He seems to draw us to Himself. Within this sphere of rest the fears of outward things are subdued, vanquished by His Love; and love within us becomes stronger to endure, to wait, to persevere.

The strength which increases within the soul thus restful in her Lord, becomes the strength of the Church. Does it not seem to us sometimes better to be astir and active in some distinctive occupation, than to spend time in quietude and prayer?

And probably but few persons can go through years of spiritual life, with opportunities of resting in the Presence of their Lord, without sometimes being tempted to seek distraction, and sometimes the temptation becomes such that the distraction is sought even in hurtful ways. The strength of the soul, the strength of the Church, is the result of union with Christ. We know not the strength if we know not the union. We cannot know the joy of union if, occupied with worldly cares, or with trifling distractions, we take no thought for the realization of it in love. Here is our way open. By seeking daily the covenanted Presence of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, even at some cost to ourselves, we shall have our reward—rest with Jesus.

4. *THE SPHERE OF GROWTH*

The growth of spiritual power is consequent upon spiritual communion with our Lord. This is true, whether taken in the broadest sense, or limited to the act of particular communion with God in the Blessed Sacrament. For the present our thoughts are bound to this latter consideration. Each Eucharist is the occasion of Divine visitation; —no less than that, and therefore it makes slackness with regard to communion a specially serious matter. If we recognized always that it is the occasion of Divine visitation, would there be a moment of hesitation, of slackness? His Presence

becomes "a factor in our life." But to make this effective there must be a true consciousness of that Presence on the part of the communicant. So we need to encourage—I might almost say, to cultivate—that consciousness, to educate ourselves in the realization of that wonderful fact of the Divine Presence.

The practice of the Presence of God, which we call Recollection, makes this consciousness deep and full; and it also makes the soul responsive to His special nearness and presence vouchsafed in the Blessed Sacrament. How wonderful is that hidden life of the soul which takes its specific character from the soul's secret communion with God! How wonderful is that growth which is shaped by the loving care of God! How wonderful is the fact that the soul cannot estimate her own riches in the love and goodness of God! His ways are too secret, His gifts too profound, for any distinct knowledge to pass even to the soul herself. They are beyond the knowledge of the senses. The soul perseveres in communion, practises recollection, and, alone with her Beloved in holy and sweet consciousness of union, approaches the Blessed Sacrament, resting, as we have seen, in the Divine Presence.

But consider what that involves. She is detached and free, spirit with Spirit she enters into communion with the Beloved; and He, multiplying His gifts, clothes her with increasing beauty. The

touch of the Beloved imparts some Divine treasure for the enrichment of her life. And yet she knows not the height and depth of her joy, or the glory which is hers. Sometimes indeed, for a brief space, she does realize much, enough to make the burden of the flesh well-nigh insupportable; but this passes, and in its place, or rather as the blessed result of it, there remains the interior sense of life veiled within us, the life in which we are one with God.

Sometimes we are tempted to feel that something must be wrong when, after some specially holy time of communion, we find ourselves only conscious of secret, interior union, while the joy and inner glory of it seem to have passed away. But that is, after all, what we want. We cannot always remain at the height to which our Lord was pleased to raise us, but we can abide in quiet, restful consciousness of union with Him. True, we cannot always perceive so much, but that does not matter. The more ordinary times, when we are only conscious of resting in His Presence, or of being braced and nerved by the Life and Love within which we are held, are quite as necessary to our spiritual growth. And we do grow in spiritual power, and probably we prove it when next we are tempted, or some special demand is made upon our strength. In particular we shall prove it when some call is made upon us to test our union with Him, or to prove the power of His Spirit within

us. It may be some new form of suffering, some higher call to sacrifice. Then it is that the graces of the soul flourish, not only ideally as when we felt the joy of His Presence, but actually, as in union with Himself He leads us in the way of His Cross.

There is a close connection in the spiritual life between the joy of contemplation and the glory of sacrifice. The crushing difficulties of the Cross call forth the sweetness of hidden graces and make manifest the growth of the spirit. And as the fragrance of active virtues rises up to God, so does He renew in us grace and strength in the delight with which He visits the soul. In our times of quiet resting and of secret growth in the presence of our Lord we must look up to Him; such Divine favours come usually with a great demand upon our faith and love, our courage and patience. It is quite certain that they who are called to receive great spiritual favours from their Lord are always called to great suffering. In some way or other they have to bear great trials, greater than those who know little of their higher experiences. But happy is that soul whom our Lord calls to glorify Him in the conflict of life, having first so richly endowed her. We cannot but say that here is the great opportunity. She may be distressed, very persecuted, pained by the reproaches of the world. "*What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?*" Her answer will be sure, yea, more than sure; it

will be attested by the passion of her life: "*He is the chiefest among ten thousand.*"

Are we ready for this? Are we ready for the Cross because we know the joy of the Divine union? Is this our gladness, to prove by all means the love of our souls—love that rises in strength as we enter the Presence of the Beloved? Are we conscious in our communions that we are taking one step further into rest; one step further into that sphere of life within which we can grow, not by our own effort, but in the increase of the Divine Life within, by the coming of Him at Whose touch there will spring up, in all their beauty, the interior graces and glories of that garden of the soul in which He delights? Surely if the love for Him be, as it ought to be, the passion of our lives, nothing should keep us back from proving to Him the result of His Own Life within us, by the fruits of His Own wonderful gift to us.

MEDITATION IV

Of partaking of the Divine Nature

1. *REALIZING THE DIVINE PURPOSE IN CREATION*

God created man for Himself, to be partaker of His joy, and the object of His Love. The spiritual sense of the Catholic Church has supported the view that the Son of God would have become Man, even if there had been no necessity for Atonement. Very exalted, therefore, is the destiny of mankind. Man is marked out for great things in the Kingdom of God. It would be vain to speculate upon man's future in another world; but undoubtedly he is marked out for great things, and more than can be known here. His is the special dignity of the Divine association. In one sense he has a glory exceeding that of the angels. The Son of God "*took not on Him the nature of angels, but took on Him the seed of Abraham.*" And again, "*What is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.*" All this points to a life of glory and power altogether

beyond our present range of thought and vision. And I think we hold within ourselves the secret of this wonderful life which awaits us. There are all the possibilities of our proper spiritual nature which we cannot understand until, set free from possibility of sin, we rise to a true and glorious self-realization. We feel that those powers are within us; and somehow they witness continually to us of a life which advances towards us, even though at present it is largely hidden from us.

Already we feel the stirrings of the higher life. We wait and long for it as for our true satisfaction. And it is a satisfaction to be found in conscious likeness to the Divine. "*When I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it.*"

But these yearnings of the human heart do but correspond with the direct workings through which God makes plain His Own purpose towards us. Why did the Son of God become Incarnate? Why should there be held out to us the promise of union with God? Why should the whole of our life be made to turn upon a Sacrament, the whole conception of which is the union of man with God? Why should we be led to feel the truth of all this in our own experience of God's Love? Only one answer can be given. It is the will of God that we should not miss the glory for which we were created, that we should be exalted to the joy of His Presence in Glory.

The Blessed Sacrament may be regarded as an extension of the Mystery of the Incarnation. This we understand in our Lord's Own words: "*This is My Body . . . This is My Blood.*" There can be no true conception of the Blessed Sacrament apart from the Incarnation. Those words would be emptied of their meaning if there were no true extension of the principle of the Incarnation in the Blessed Sacrament. The Communion of His Body and Blood brings the soul into personal relation with the Incarnate Lord. "*He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him.*" To be thus made "*partakers of the Divine Nature*" through our Lord's Own Self-communication, what is it but that we are advanced towards the realization both of the purpose of God in our creation and also of our deepest desires? It is not too much to say that, as we realize what the Blessed Sacrament is to us personally, we begin to understand the meaning of our own deepest thoughts and desires, and also to discern more clearly the Mind of God towards us.

Let us keep this before us as a solemn fact of our life with God. He is working ceaselessly to the one great end. From all eternity that end has been realized in the Mind of God; whatever be the hindrance of earth it will be finally realized by every soul who is obedient to His Will. Oh, the glory of that Love which can be so patient! Oh, the glory of that purpose which God has never

abandoned, which, being God, He *could* not abandon because it is worthy of Himself, worthy of His Love! That higher purpose of God is from first to last a perfect conception of the Divine Love.

If we have this fact present to our minds, what will our communions be? They will be times of realization, as through communion the wondrous Love of God appeals to us, fills us, reveals within us the very principle of Divine action. While on the one hand we mourn over our degenerate nature and feel our own loss and suffer in our unworthiness, on the other hand we dare not give way. His Love is so strong, His grace so mighty, His Life so uplifting, that not to be encouraged would be almost a denial of the very grace of our Communions. When, further, in deeper devotion and concentration of spirit, we realize that in the Blessed Sacrament is Life—Life which is deathless Love, there is added an enthusiasm and tender reverence, He is with us Whose Love spoke from the Cross.

> "O Jesus, deathless Love, Who seeketh me,
> Thou Who didst die for longing love of me,
> Thou King, in all Thy beauty, come to me,
> White-robed, blood-sprinkled Jesus, come to me,
> And go, dear Lord, no more away from me."

So do we desire Him, so do we find Him, and in Him we find all that can exalt and ennoble us; we touch the sure ground of our soul's life, and possessing Him, and being possessed by Him, we

hold the reality beside which all that the world gives is nothingness. "*The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*"

2. *WHAT IS OUR PRESENT GLORY IN THIS PARTICIPATION?*

A glory there is, but it is a hidden glory. It is the glory of love growing within the soul; the glory of grace and virtue developing unto perfection. It is the Divine Likeness becoming more and more evident as the soul responds to the Love of God. We have to regard this as the certain result of interior workings of love, even though it be disguised from ourselves. We must accept it in faith, that so long as the soul continues lovingly and faithfully in communion with her Lord, there will be this interior development, though the glory of it must in the very nature of things be largely hidden from ourselves. We cannot always perceive it, nor would it benefit us to do so. There seems to be, indeed, a very real hiding of some interior graces from the soul's own knowledge, as if our Lord would Himself protect her humility. She may be greatly exercised through the difficulties of her life, and be wholly unaware of her own advancing sanctity. Of course she should not be eager to know it; but how difficult it is to restrain that eagerness. That much of our inner life should be hidden, even from

ourselves, is exactly what we should expect from our Lord's wonderful dealing with us through the hiddenness of His Own Life in the Blessed Sacrament.

But just as there are deep experiences of love between the soul and her Lord in the Blessed Sacrament which cannot be told, so are there corresponding developments of interior glory. The closeness of union with the Beloved makes this so great a treasure of the soul's inner life, that she will desire to protect it by the practice of humility and gentleness and every virtue, in order that it may be kept for Him. Those virtues and excellencies which we want to have within ourselves, are to be kept rather as the hidden beauty of the soul in which our Lord would delight Himself. The glory of the soul in which Christ dwells corresponds to the glory which is His in His Incarnate Life.

Consider His life on earth. How little was His Divine Glory suspected; and yet, when He willed (as in the Transfiguration), how it flashed forth! The glory was from within. So now He makes those who share His Life in the Blessed Sacrament to possess a glory which, when He wills, shall flash forth and proclaim them His Own. Not yet, not here shall we see this, notwithstanding the rays of almost Divine beauty manifested in the Saints. But when He comes "*to be glorified in His Saints*," it will be seen in every truly loving soul.

But a question rises here, what can be our own personal share in this? Life for so many is full; there are so many exacting duties, so few opportunities for quiet devotion, except when both mind and body are weary, that the idea of the soul's hidden glory seems impossible. Well, the very occupation which we deplore may be our best protection. Souls may be lost through too much leisure; the danger is far less to those who are always occupied. And if we are really living with a definite spiritual aim, we shall prove the value of everything which keeps us in separateness from the world. Leisure encourages secularity, and brings the soul into too close contact with the world, and with the things which multiply temptations.

There may be a joyful consciousness of all that our Lord is doing in us that will redeem our lives from the bondage of monotony. If we only can bring into our days that one certain truth, that our Lord is working in us, for us, by means of us, then the monotony of crowded days of work will hardly be felt; and that same joyful consciousness will enable us to make a right response in the day of discipline. The fruit of discipline is purity of heart, without which we can neither see God nor become partakers of His glory. If we have to endure discipline, be sure that God desires great things for us; only let us respond faithfully and lovingly, and seek to be "*fellow-workers with God*" in the work of our sanctification. God never asks

great things of a soul for whom He does not reserve great things. "The most certain sign that a soul is very dear to God is when He requires very much from it; when He demands of it all that it can give; and when it lets Him take all that it would not itself know how to give."

A thought remains, which must be approached with the utmost humility and reverence. If we are made partakers of the glory of Christ in our communions, He rejoices in that fact. In His desire towards us, He takes pleasure in every sign of grace in us. Oh, then, with what carefulness should not we seek to preserve everything in which He can delight! There is nothing in a true life that may not be so regarded, from the innermost movement of love to the highest act of prayer; from the simplest act of will to the bravest, noblest efforts of a holy life. All these are the effects of His Life within us, and in every one He delights. Oh, we are never outside the conditions of this glory of the Sacramental Life; we may each, therefore, in the exercise of Holy Fear find this joy of the Divine Love: "*The Lord's delight is in them that fear Him, and put their trust in His mercy.*"

We may take up the thought of our daily or frequent communions, and ask ourselves how far there is in us this increase of life, and of grace, in which our Lord Himself can delight. Can we know so much about ourselves? We can tell if we are more surrendered in desire and will, and

that is the result of His Own work of love in us. And the joy of surrender is reached in the knowledge which He gives of His Own pleasure in us. That knowledge is pure joy in which self-contemplation yields to the inspiration of love, and a longing for perfect union with Him in will. And then we learn to trust our Lord in the holy reserve of His Love.

3. *WHAT WE ARE TO HOPE FOR HEREAFTER*

If there be such interior glory and enrichment of the soul in this life, what may we not expect and hope for in the life to come? It is well for us sometimes, when we have made our communion and realized something of the glory of our state in this present time, to consider the question, "What does this mean for me as I shall see it in the Last Great Day, when the full glory of the life beyond breaks upon my soul?" Made here "*partakers of the Divine Nature*," we shall there realize eternally all for which the present gift is but a preparation. What, then, must that be of which the preparation alone is so intensely beautiful! What a wonderful life that must be which can require this preparation —the partaking of the Divine Nature! What must be that eternal reality for which nothing less than the Communion of our Lord's Holy Body and Blood can be a fit preparation! There are wonderful words relating to the glory of the soul hereafter, He will "*be glorified in His Saints.*" "*We shall be*

like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." We shall be with Him beholding His glory, as our Lord Himself prayed for us. And yet even such words as these impress us with something less than the reality until we take them and endeavour, as far as our love enables us, to perceive the intensity of Divine Love which breathes through them, and so perceive in faintest outline the evidence of promised glory. And yet always there is that which can never be told. "*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.*"

Are we ever impatient in our longing to behold the "*things which God hath prepared*"? Sometimes the longing comes into our hearts to behold the full richness of that which we begin to feel now; but let us be patient, there is a peculiar strength as there is also a special reward which is given to the soul that can be patient and strong in faith. We have knowledge sufficient for faith to rest upon, sufficient to encourage us in every movement of love, and if we are wise we shall not seek to pierce the veil of the unknown. S. John of the Cross says, "Thou doest well then, O soul, in seeking Him always in His secret place; for thou greatly magnifiest God, and drawest near unto Him, esteeming Him as far beyond and above all thou canst reach. Rest, therefore, neither wholly nor in part, on what thy faculties can embrace; never seek to satisfy thyself with what thou

comprehendest of God, but rather with what thou comprehendest not; and never rest on the love of, and delight in that which thou canst understand and feel, but rather on that which is beyond thy understanding and feeling: this is, as I have said, to seek Him by faith."[1]

But we have a duty in view of that Day of the Lord. We should seek continually to deepen and quicken our realization of our Lord's Self-communication in the Blessed Sacrament. The more we know of Jesus in us, the more shall we understand how the future must be unfolded in glory. The Heavenly Manna contains in itself all sweetness, and through its sweetness we come to know something of the hidden treasure of the Divine Love. The way to this lies first through prayer and meditation. We should meditate often upon the Blessed Sacrament, if we would know all that God intends for us by means of It. Among really good people there is often a sad poverty of thought and of spirit in all that relates to the Holy Eucharist. It is, indeed, in secular life a remarkably sad fact that so few people have any true appreciation of the Sacramental Life; and yet it is the very heart and substance of the Catholic Religion.

And further, the way of realization is no uncommon way, but the common way of life. If in obedience to the Beloved we "*abide in Him*" and persevere in the way of union, we shall feel the

[1] *S. C.*, i. 17.

influence of His Life in every duty, every work and purpose. Such richness of life will be given, and such strength of love, that we shall form true and just conceptions not only of this life, but also of eternity. This is possible of attainment by every one; and everything which enters into our life from day to day, whether duty or difficulty, or pleasure or pain, may be a means of proving His Love in us and so of perfecting our conception of all that is promised to us in Him. Love, transforming the soul into His Likeness, becomes the means of deepening knowledge. Transformed into His Likeness we shall know in Him all that is prepared for us. And now, while love is working to this end, we grow in knowledge, content to wait the eternal satisfaction. "*When I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it.*"

If we are careful of our life as communicants, it will become the increasing joy of our days to know what in Christ is both given and promised; and if we take care to meditate frequently upon the Blessed Sacrament and upon our own enrichment by means of It, we shall find a very wonderful joy in all our communions, a very real growing into the knowledge of what is stored for us in the boundless Life of God.

If beyond this, we permit ourselves to ponder the saying of S. Paul, that Jesus will "*be glorified in His Saints*," we see that it is the glory of His Own Life in us which will then be seen, and He

will be glorified according to the degree of our union with Him. That is a very important point to remember when we are looking forward to the glory wherewith our Lord will be glorified in us. What glory, then, awaits the faithful soul! What dignity is conferred in Holy Communion! Can we make it more to our own souls than we have done? Can we bring the glory and the joy of our Lord's Life into our daily routine? Can we make it a present reality, and not a distant hope merely? Yes, for He is ever the same. He will be our joy there, because He has been our joy here. Be conformed to Him in love, and the future will be sure and the very anticipation of it glorious in the light of the Divine certainty—the calm, sustaining certainty of the Divine Love possessing us, a deep, glad certainty as we grow from day to day into the wonder of the reality of our Lord's Life, that Life in which we are to find for all eternity our highest joy.

4. *THIS GLORY IS BASED ON HUMILITY*

"*He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*" However wondrously that word of our Lord will be fulfilled in His Saints hereafter, there is a present fulfilment which is scarcely less wonderful in souls which here are truly humble. We have thought of the glory assured to the faithful through communion. And now, lest we be carried away in contemplation of the vision presented to us, let us

think of that which is the only true beginning of glory—humility. I have called it a beginning, because humility is the first fruit of love, the first sign of perfection. It is the greatest of virtues. Are we specially favoured in communion? Does our Lord come to us filling our souls with His joy and love? Are our prayers the occasions of holy, uplifting gladness in Him? Are we specially conscious of His supporting grace? Then let us be very humble. "*What hast thou, that thou didst not receive?*" asks the Apostle. And what have we of all this spiritual blessing which is of ourselves? What is there of all that we experience, or perceive, that is of ourselves? Is it not always that which comes into our souls from Him? "*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty Hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.*" That Hand mighty in love is laid upon us in blessing, for our guidance. And the more humbly we take every gift, the more is it made ours and confirmed in us.

If we are recipients of great grace, the "*natural man*" in us desires to appropriate it, to be proud of it, and even to boast of it. Is it not true? Yes, and although we may not boast outwardly, there is sometimes a secret disposition to boast of it to ourselves and to be inwardly proud of the favour of God. The "*natural man*" within us desires to appropriate and to be proud of it. Not so the "*spiritual man*," for the spirit perceives the truth of all in God and is humble. We ought, indeed, to

practise humility, and first by making interior acts. Very much, indeed, after the example of Lacordaire, who, after his highest times of success, humbled himself more in secret within himself. The outward habit or manner is not first to be sought, for an assumed humility is only the worst form of pride. But humility must be an interior virtue perfected by interior acts, and those acts should be persevered in the more because of the abundance of the grace which is given. In the truest sense, he that humbleth himself is exalted.

Great gifts in prayer and spiritual power are increased in the humble soul. "Virtue does not consist in these apprehensions and feelings about God, however sublime they may be, nor in any personal experiences of this kind, but on the contrary, in that which is not a matter of feeling at all—in great humility, contempt of ourselves and of all that belongs to us, profoundly rooted in the soul, and in being glad that others have the same opinion of us, and in not wishing to be thought well of by others at all," as S. John of the Cross says.[1] If we could be always thus consistently humble we should need less painful discipline.

There is no doubt that sometimes seasons of grace and gladness are succeeded by days of aridity and darkness, for no other reason than that we were not humble, but rather given to spiritual

[1] *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book III., chap. viii. sec. 3.

pride. And so we are visited with dryness of spirit and inner desolation. It is a difficult matter to trace the causes of aridity; but if we are overtaken by it, we ought to try and see if it can be fairly accounted for.

The cause is as likely to be found in some hidden root of pride as in anything. Then it is that even our dryness is found to be a blessing, for amidst aridities and emptiness the soul acquires spiritual humility. What a mercy it is that we are outwardly humbled by God, that the soul may learn to be inwardly humble! We know how humiliating it is after some season of grace to be overtaken with darkness and dryness of spirit. It is meant to be so that we may learn interiorly to be humble. If, therefore, we are suffering in this way in spirit, let us at once humble ourselves beneath the Hand of God, and He will exalt us again in due time, and then we shall be wiser for the chastisement. "*Oh, what great troubles and adversities hast Thou showed me; and yet didst Thou turn again and refresh me, and broughtest me from the deep of the earth again.*"

Humility leads to the perfect losing of the self in God. And then what secret joy fills the soul! Her Beloved is all, she is nothing, she desires nothing save that whereby He may be glorified. And yet what glory invests the soul! It is the glory of Christ which invests her, and the more wondrously as through her humility she is made one with Him.

Beneath the robe of humility is the gathering glory of the Divine Love in her. That robe of humility hides it from the world, and hides it most effectually from herself. And then this thought comes, Will she ever part with that robe? Having worn it through the world, having drawn it more closely about her as the dark days of the world gathered round her, will the day ever come when she can dispense with it? part with it? No, but the sadness of its hue in the eyes of the world, will be so transformed in the light of the Glory of God, that it will appear like the robe of the Beloved Who for our sakes "*humbled Himself.*" We shall see it in that day, a robe so glorious, so like His, that it will distinguish the Saints who are nearest to Him. And unto that Glory may He in His Mercy bring us with all who love Him in humility.

MEDITATION V

Of the Life of Communion (*a*)

1. *ITS STRENGTH*

"*The Lord is my strength.*" How wondrously true is that of the soul to whom the life of Communion is a reality! It suggests to us so very much more than we may at all times quite realize. Indeed, we might ask, Do we ever perfectly realize it? We are mindful of it in the Saints, but so chilling and deadening is the influence of the world, that we come to think of the Saints as exercising a supernatural strength to which we have no claim. But this is a great mistake. The true spiritual life, the true Sacramental life, is supernatural. It is as powerful for the sanctification of souls to-day as it was when the greatest Saints lived their lives and bore their witness to the Love of God. It is just as efficacious to-day, in the lives of those who are bound together, as it was when the great Orders sprang into existence and power. The supernatural life can never become effete. If in these days we grieve for the weakness of souls, we shall not find relief in

novelties of religious practice, but in reassertion of Sacramental Life.

Let the soul contemplate her own greatness after communion, her new blessing and strength. That which is hers is beyond all conception in its richness and beauty. That which is Divine has come to her, and all her life and powers should develop under the influence of that heavenly communication. She is strong to the extent of her own loving response. She becomes increasingly strong as the effects of her Lord's Life and Love are seen in her. Of course that implies the opposite truth, that the strength given to the soul becomes inoperative, in so far as she herself fails to exercise the new power with which she is invested. Our Lord comes to the soul, He abides in and with her. The graces of His Life become effectual in the soul through all the ways in which she can correspond to His movements. The result is a very holy quickening of life. Graces spring up in all their beauty, adorning both the life as seen and that which is hidden. Especially are these hidden graces, or rather, these are graces the true beauty of which is seen only within the soul. In such does the Beloved rejoice. In such the soul is permitted to rejoice with Him. Very beautiful is the growth of such souls, and though their beauty is so delicate as to be scarcely seen, save by a few who know them from without, it is beauty concealing that which is

very sure, very strong. We cannot find a soul beautiful in Divine graces, however delicate they may be, without understanding and feeling that that soul is intensely strong; but the strength is not that which first appears, it becomes evident when the soul is assaulted, or some particular demand is made upon her. It is in the increase of these graces that the soul becomes truly strong. Spiritual strength is not a simple endowment, but rather it is a combination of virtues and graces, which makes the soul marvellously strong. "*Terrible as an army with banners*," so is the soul in which graces are developed and ordered in the Divine Love.

Very blessed and full of promise is the life of that soul which is strong in grace. God does not give such strength except to those who are persevering in grace, and so growing into completeness of union that He may manifest His Love in them, and impart the sense of His Own joy in the graces which adorn the soul.

But let not any one who is so advancing suppose that they can be wholly free from trial. They have trials to which weaker souls are strangers. Some appear to think that because certain souls seem to be particularly holy and detached that therefore life for them is easy. But that is a very great mistake. Every true master of the spiritual life lays it down as a truth that the soul that is being most perfected has to endure the greatest trials.

And such souls feel keenly the power of evil; their own exaltation enables them to recognize its subtlety. Removed from love of the world, they feel the dangers of the world's life for others almost more than for themselves. And in the inner life they are peculiarly sensitive. It seems that so little will occasion clouds and shadows in their way. The truth is that as Christ dwells within He leads the soul to that holy separateness and purity in which the light of His Love may shine unhindered within. In this interior life of the soul made strong, all these trials will be felt, but they are of the nature of helps to all who will use them well. And so, if, on the one hand, the soul advancing in grace and sanctity perceives an increase of trial and of difficulty; on the other hand, she learns to regard them as but veiled benefits, circumstances which may be used for the glory of God and her own sanctification. But for these things, how should we become truly strong? How could we become strong if we were never tested? Is not the perfection of strength in union with the Beloved? How could we prove our union if there were no such things as tests? Hence the value of everything which will keep the soul in detachment and purity. We should, indeed, so respond to the movements of the Holy Spirit of Discipline as to make this a very real thing in the inner life.

But how often is it true that, feeling some

weakness, we give way, not considering the value of our last communion! How often have we found ourselves, within a few hours of our communion, giving way before some temptation or trial, losing almost our self-respect? We are so suddenly overtaken that we give way. There are new trials and unexpected developments in our temptations which suggest despair. We know this, and we ought to recognize at once the true strength of our souls in our communions, and exert ourselves as strongly as possible, and look on these difficult things as so many tests of strength. We must rest in our Lord, confident in the grace of Sacramental union. We must be very strong in faith and undaunted in love. If we look to the result in spiritual gain, we shall find that out of weakness we shall be made strong.

Oh, we want a finer, truer, worthier estimation of the grace of our communion. We want to understand and perceive its reality in the highest movements of spirit and in the most ordinary ways of daily duty. We want to have our consciousness of the richness of our soul through communion as a high and lofty experience, lifting us up to God; but we want to have it also as the simplest, most ordinary feeling of our hourly life, as we enter upon the duties of our course, and discharge them faithfully, because we are His. No other thought can be quite true to our life, lived, as it has to be lived, in contact with people and things and circumstances, which make us, to a great extent, what we

are. "*I am with you all the days.*" This is our joy and strength.

2. *ITS FULNESS*

The fulness of the Life of Communion is that which the soul receives out of the fulness of the Divine Life. It follows as the proper result of a good communion. To be made partakers of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, is to be "*filled with all the fulness of God.*" In Christ dwelleth "*all the fulness of the Godhead;*" and "*of His fulness have we all received.*" But we must not think or speak vaguely of this "*fulness.*" It is used in the New Testament somewhat frequently, and the word has a very definite theological value in the language of S. John and S. Paul. They employ the word as expressing the sum of the Divine perfections, the completeness of the Divine Life and Glory. So that when we find the word in the Gospel of S. John, or in the Epistles of S. Paul, and pause to consider the word "*fulness*" with this definite theological meaning, I think we shall see how very wonderful and how very beautiful the passages become.

No just view can be taken of the Sacramental Life which does not include this as its true characteristic. We may not avoid a truth so high, a dignity so glorious as this, that the soul is not complete in life until she is fulfilled with "*the fulness of God.*" It is a very wonderful thought,

and if it were not given to us in Holy Scripture itself, we should not dare to take it to ourselves, just because it seems to imply a greatness of soul almost beyond what we can conceive of ourselves. It is that for our eternal completeness we need the Divine union.

Every gift of grace, every outpouring of the Spirit, every infusion of love, fills up, according to its measure, the soul that receives it. And so we can think of the whole of the spiritual life as the fulfilling of the soul, and of the continuous enrichment of the spiritual life; but we will confine our thought to the Life of Communion as being the centre and heart of our spiritual efforts.

Our communions, therefore, are our chief care; upon them will be built up all that can perfect the soul in the advancing ways of prayer. We must look to our communion for this special help, and we shall prepare for it. So great a good cannot be given unless there be first some fitness for the Gift, and so as we understand what God has in store for us, we must prepare to receive it. God's highest gifts are bestowed always upon the faithful, the humble, the meek, and the loving. And this fulness of life in communion is to be ours only in obedience to that law.

How, then, can we prepare? Of course we shall make our ordinary and regular preparation for communion; but, after all, that is but a part of a work of preparation, which embraces the

whole spiritual work of the life. We have to regard every spiritual effort in the light of a preparation for the higher work of God. The characteristic graces of true sanctity are not developed speedily and without effort, but their development is the true preparation for this enrichment of life, out of "*the fulness of God.*" Such graces as humility, detachment, meekness, not only represent the fruit of spiritual effort, but also they indicate the soul's capacity for God. That is to say, the soul in which these are found is capable of receiving more of God. They are not found in the soul that is not becoming empty of self-love. When the soul is empty of self-love, God can fill it with Himself. There are degrees of spiritual life which are specially marked by this filling up of the soul with Divine Gifts.[1] But we are concerned with the ordinary gifts which all may expect in the Blessed Sacrament. While there is the continual preparation of the soul in the way of humility and detachment of sacrifice and devotion, there will be a work of God corresponding with the soul's effort. God will fill the soul more and more as she is free to contain Him. The soul made so rich in God will become almost too humble to know her own glory. Like the Apostle who had received so much from his Lord and yet regarded himself as the "*chief of sinners,*" she will be careful to maintain the good works of grace and

[1] Cf. S. John of the Cross, *S. C.*, xiv. 12.

love. In communion she will show all carefulness and recollection, and yet without excitement and effort after mere feeling. Our Lord is most honoured in the Blessed Sacrament by the calmness and gentleness of a strong love, not by unreal fervour, or forced emotions, for these latter destroy the peace which ever distinguishes the Divine Presence and Gift within the soul. It is a point which is not quite enough recognized, that the soul loses peace if she overstrains herself and forces herself into unreal emotion. Are we, then, to suspect as unreal every time of uplifting and fervour? No. But we need to be always careful not to force our spirits, but wait for those better and higher seasons of joy which our Lord will give us. When He pleases, He will fill our souls with sweetness, or exalt us in ecstasy; but when He does so, it will always be with an increase of peace and a sensible filling of our souls with the riches of His Own Life and Love. This will increase our strength and refine our feelings; but false emotion is but weakness. This is the fulness of the Life of Communion, the deep joy and peace of the Divine Life. Our Lord will give it to the prepared soul as He will. At one time through a succession of communions which seem but ordinarily restful and glad; at another, by some more particularly sensible delight in His Gift. Our duty is to abide in the preparedness of grace and love, and we may be sure He will not fail of His goodness to fill up

the soul out of the rich treasure of His Own Life.

We may add here a word of caution. We sometimes hear of souls who are very specially blessed in communion, and we are thankful to know that it is true of very many. But we may be tempted sometimes to envy those who are seemingly more favoured than ourselves. That is both wrong in itself, and unworthy of us; we ought never to allow such a thought. To envy other souls their spiritual privileges is not only unworthy, it is a most unwise thing to do; it shows we are mistaking the ways of God. God has many ways of dealing with souls, but He loves them all, and He does not love us less because He has withheld from us some particular gift. Perhaps, in His Own wonderful love, He is but preparing us for some distinguishing mark of His goodness, to be given to us either here or hereafter. We should be thankful, on the one hand, that God does so love all souls as to give them graces so high and wonderful, and also that He does so tenderly regard us as to show His Love by treating us in another way.

3. *ITS SYMPATHY*

To be so filled with God will lead us on to another thought of the soul's experience in communion—that is, the sympathy between herself and God.

Every distinct experience of His goodness, every moment of true realization of His Love, increases that interior knowledge of His care, which gives such holy rest to the suffering soul. We are able to feel the activity of His Love as it comes into our lives through the very facts and conditions which give us pain. "*He knoweth whereof we are made, He remembereth that we are but dust.*" He knows "*what is in man.*" He knows the pain and distress from which we cannot escape, and from which in His Wisdom He does not yet deliver us. We have to remember that, although God does not always deliver us from the pain or the difficulty which may trouble us, He is never unmindful of it. Divine love could never be indifferent to, or unaffected by, our pains. God uses our troubles as means by which to communicate His Love. And when they are accepted and used in the way of mortification and sacrifice, He does impart a wonderful sense of His Love. He imparts to souls through pain, distress, deprivation, and discipline a sense of love, a knowledge of His interior sweetness, which could not be received in other ways. It is, therefore, a mistake to be eager to be without suffering. We should use it, and learn by it, and prove through it the infinite, tender love of God.

But it is not in suffering only, nor indeed chiefly, that we are to prove the Divine sympathy. Life is not made up of distresses; there are some joys for every soul, and we are to live in union

with our Lord and rejoice in His Love, and rest in His peace at all times. And so intimate may this union and association be, that His sympathy may become the most natural, the most expected of all our common experiences. We shall know it as the benediction of His Love upon all our work our pursuits, our days. It will be the health of our moral and spiritual life, it will be just that touch of healthfulness that will save us from many a dark despairing thought, from many a depressing hour. Efforts and aspirations, the exercise of natural powers, the use of gifts mental and spiritual, will be accompanied with a new joy: He is with us. He is in sympathy with us! Think how all this will keep the soul from unhealthy dispositions and scruples. There will be a holy vigour, a simple directness, a pure intention which will develop more and more towards the ideal of true union: "*I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*"

The consciousness of this union, as it grows in distinctness, must be the foundation of conduct if we would prove the Divine sympathy. Strengthened and renewed in every Eucharist this union comes to be the simple fact of life, but it is the fact which is all-inclusive. It is a fact which stands, as it were, outside all other experiences of our spiritual life. It is a fact which is all-embracing, all-inclusive; we are not able to separate our true spiritual experience from the fact of our Sacramental union with our Lord. Nothing is of value

except in relation to that fact. And how readily the soul perceives within herself the true relations of thought and purpose and desire. They interpret the movements of the Divine sympathy, or they intensify them. There may be times of doubt, and it is possible to deceive ourselves, for things of the spirit are often very closely allied with ambitions and pleasures that are essentially earthly and selfish. But danger is averted by the soul's effort to bring "*into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*"

And again, the value of each separate experience is proved by its fruit. We are nearer to God, or we are further away from Him. But even so, "*how wonderful He is in His doing toward the children of men!*" Not in our days of doubt or self-deception does He wholly leave us. Perhaps of all our experiences that proves His tenderness and His Love most of all: that in our days of doubt and self-deception He is ever watching—if we may so dare to put it—His opportunity to deal with our souls in such a way as to lift them out of the shadows of self-deception into the light and liberty of His Own most perfect Love. His sympathy waits upon our movements still. He knows the real desire of the soul for His Love, and waits the time when, the veil of self-deception being taken away, the soul may perceive her true rest and safety. So He comforts her. Sometimes the very moment of communion is associated with the clearing of

the soul's vision in some time of spiritual darkness, or it is associated with special refreshment of spirit in times of great dryness and aridity. Many souls have experienced this, and have proved in most intimate ways the sympathy of the Beloved.

But there is another side to this experience of sympathy in the Life of Communion. To be sure of the sympathy of God, we need to be in sympathy with Him. To this end we should contemplate the Will of God working ever in the power of the Divine Love, and rise up with constantly renewed desire to be wholly one with Him in will. "*Thy Will be done.*" We not only pray for grace to do this according to the measure of our own powers and opportunities in this life, but also we pray that it may be done, accomplished for all Eternity. This is the desire of love, rising up to God, expressing itself in and through His Life, because in no other way can perfect love attain its end. In sympathy with God! If to experience His sympathy is our soul's joy and comfort in all conditions of her life, then to be able to rise up in love, and to be in active sympathy with Him in the working of His Love, is to attain to the noblest spiritual attitude. How often we fail! The Chosen Three were called to this particular action in Gethsemane: "*Tarry ye here and watch with Me.*" They were called to the holy privilege of being in active sympathy with their Lord in the trial of His Passion, and they failed. We are led to the shadow of some spiritual

trial, guided to some ennobling sacrifice, to some heroic work, or into some sanctifying hiddenness, and we fail because we will not forget ourselves and only seek to identify our love, our will, with His.

Contemplate, now, the great act of communion. It is the renewal of Sacramental union. Divinely humble, our Lord gives Himself. And we, in the spirit of His humility, humble and obedient, give ourselves. This may be most wonderful in the consolation and sympathy of Jesus; it may be most wonderful in the exaltation of the soul in union, and she may be moved to give herself in love, in the sympathy in which all thought of self is lost in the joy of sharing the love, the will, the life of the Beloved. "We are one with Christ, and Christ with us."

4. *ITS ASPIRATION*

The realization of perfect sympathy between the soul and her Lord in the Life of Communion develops naturally into the joy and energy of aspiration. We cannot be in sympathy with God without having very sweet, very holy intuitions of the Divine Life. We shall treasure every advancing thought of Divine Wisdom, every fresh glimpse of the Divine Beauty. Love will become strong and desire will increase as we contemplate them. The feeling of our heart will be more constantly expressed in aspiration. Aspiration is a conscious lifting up of the whole being in response to God,

as we feel His strength and rejoice in the support of His grace. It is the conscious rising of the soul who wants to prove more and more what is the treasure of her life in the Beloved. We should seek to develop this as the habit of the soul. The consciousness of Sacramental union with Christ, of His Life in us, of His Love exalting us, should make us long for all that is being yet held and kept for us by Him in anticipation of perfect union. To be ever lifting up the heart in the realization of love will become the most natural movement.

There will be difficulties and hindrances, for the enemy will not permit us to exercise ourselves so profitably without, at least, attempting to turn us aside. We shall be tempted to over-estimation of temporal advantages, we shall feel the difficulties of even the most ordinary recollection, we shall be betrayed perhaps into manifold ways of forgetfulness. We may begin to think it perhaps unnecessary to look so constantly upward and Heavenward. But all these difficulties indicate the great value of continuous aspiration. We can always infer the good of any spiritual act, from the diligence of the enemy in seeking to turn us away from it. So it is in this case, the enemy will seek by all means to turn us away from aspiration. It is therefore necessary to use great care, and never to be turned aside from the Will of God, which is to be accomplished in the soul's sanctification and union with Himself.

Consider, therefore. We are brought into Sacramental union with our Lord, and the blessedness of our state is not all at once realized. Its sweetness and richness in Divine Love lies hidden until it is called forth by the active love of our souls, and this may be done in meditation. If we are careful to lift up our hearts to our Lord, seeking to realize His indwelling and love, we shall find how great is the joy which he brings. It is easy to do this after communion and before the daily occupations have dimmed the early freshness of devotion. And very beautiful are the glimpses we may gain of the Divine Life presented, as it were, within ourselves, both for our consolation and also for our instruction in the ways of Divine Love. We learn so much, or rather, we find ourselves in possession of particular knowledge of God as from His Own gift. And truly it is so. The knowledge of the Love of God is given essentially and substantially; and the more we contemplate His Gift of Himself, the more we awaken to an inward knowing of Him. We may have proved that again and again. Our truest knowledge of God is that which we have gained from the secret communion of our hearts with Him. It is not because we have been told of the Love of God, nor because we have heard it discoursed upon; but because we have proved it within the hidden depths of our souls.

There is no doubt that great loss is incurred

when we are hurried after our communions and quickly absorbed in the pursuits of the day, and so there is needed a special carefulness to be recollected. Recollection is not dull silence. It is an interior occupation of the soul with God. It can be practised in the busy life as well as in solitude.

Two suggestions may be made here. (1) In work, in recreation, in conversation, in reading, in the necessary duties of our common life, let there be, as frequently as possible, short pauses; we need not be at much trouble to take them, for they come naturally; let these moments be used. We can for the moment lift the heart in aspiration. "My God, my Lord!" We can renew the thought which gave us help at our communion, or in our meditation. We can recall the moments of highest joy which God gave us in our prayer. (2) At all times to accustom ourselves to turn to God with some spiritual movement, even without words, in worship, adoration, and the homage of love. And this effort need not be regarded as at all a difficult one. By frequent aspirations any soul will advance in the ways of prayer, and be led to a high degree of union. In the busy ways of life, we sometimes hear people speak of contemplation and contemplative souls indulgently, as though they were abnormal as types of Christian perfection. The spiritual blessing which a few souls are able to enjoy, being specially called to prayer, may be found also by busy souls who in the duties of their

calling will use the prayer of Aspiration. It seems a slower method and not so attractive as a life in which there are specially marked devotions and wonderful experiences of light and grace; but the merit of life consists not in doing things outside our powers and opportunities, but in doing that which is possible to us. In no life is communion wholly impossible; in no life is there lack of opportunity for loving aspiration. No life, therefore, is outside the highest possibilities of sanctification. And if in our life of communion we can prove these four things—Strength, Fulness, Sympathy, and Aspiration—how rich the life will become! How wonderful will be the interior movements of the soul held thus in union with her Lord! And yet it is to that we are called, it is to that we are to reach; not at one bound, indeed, but by faithful, loving use of the means which God has given; and not least among those means will be the effort to aspire lovingly to our Lord.

MEDITATION VI

Of the Life of Communion (*b*)

1. *FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST*

"*He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him.*" What wondrous fellowship is this which our Lord promises to the faithful communicant! We receive Him into our own being, and He receives us into Himself. We enter into fellowship with the Sacred Manhood, and through Him into fellowship with the Godhead. The more we try to realize this fact, the more glorious does this mystery of fellowship appear. And then we begin to realize the great purpose of God in our creation. God made us for Himself and gave us a spiritual nature fitted for fellowship with Himself, for union with Himself. Human nature is so wonderful that it needs the Life of God to complete it. This as our destiny could not be reached by souls under the condemnation of sin. It was the original purpose of God, but it had been set aside, frustrated by the sin which had come into the world. But the disabilities have been removed through the obedience and sacrifice of the Incarnate Son, in Whom we have "*access*,"

as the Apostle expresses it, into the life for which we were created. Spiritual natures can find no satisfaction in that which is less than God. And if we understand the deep inner meaning of our own spiritual experiences, we shall find that we are coming day by day to a better understanding of that which is, after all, but an elemental truth of our nature. We need God for the perfecting of our own being. That is to say, we need that from God which can only be given to us through the closest, most definitely appointed association with Him.

We look for the perfect satisfaction hereafter; but here, also, we are to know the joy of fellowship with God, the peace of true union. This was ever the goal of our Lord's teaching. "*He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him.*" "*As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.*" "*Abide in Me, and I in you.*" We miss both the strength and joy of life when we stop short of that as its true realization. It should, therefore, be very definitely considered.

It is a state of spiritual life within the reach of every one. The hindrances which exist are mainly those of ignorance, where souls are uninstructed; or, of spiritual weakness, where souls are failing in effort. But recognizing these, as perhaps our own difficulties, let us see beyond them the beauty of Divine fellowship, and set ourselves to attain to

the realization of it. Let us rightly judge of the consequences of our own spiritual acts, of prayer and communion, and let us perform these acts lovingly and with full consciousness of all that they mean to us. Yes, and of all that they mean to God Who has enjoined them, and we shall know what is meant by the Divine fellowship. Carefulness in this direction is really required. We know how the continual repetition of acts of devotion tends to minimize our appreciation of each act by itself. How often we make some act of devotion, or go through some familiar prayer, and even make our communions, without entering into the reality of the act itself, so as to understand how we are brought thereby into direct personal communion with our Lord. From this knowledge of ourselves we should proceed to the performance of all our acts lovingly, with due regard to the effect they are to have upon our souls in relation to God. We shall then know the deep reality of the Divine communication which passes expression. "*The secret of the Lord*" is known in this interior joy of fellowship. The soul rejoices in the Beloved, and He delights in the soul. His delight is in the realization of that which His Love requires, while the soul rejoices not for that which gratifies herself, but for the glory of His Love.

Again, abiding in fellowship with Jesus, we shall be ready for all the demands upon our spiritual nature. True fellowship with Jesus is

realized as much in work as in prayer, as much in suffering as in joy. The work of life from day to day, and all the various experiences of trial and suffering, are not contrary to the ideal of fellowship with Him Whose Life was so busy that the days left Him no leisure for prayer, and Whose Soul knew the deepest human sorrows. These things have the power to distract us and spoil our peace only when we do not realize our fellowship with our Lord. If we are supported in the daily work and trial, so also should we cease from all anxious forebodings. We know that trials will come, we may even know the time of their coming and the form in which they will appear, but it is not necessary to think of them so as to fear them. Our safety lies in perfecting our fellowship with our Lord. Our very preparedness for trial consists in this fellowship, and we shall not fail, rather shall we gain, through experience, in that deep and wonderful knowledge of the Beloved which is granted only to the humble and faithful; granted, moreover, to those who will, for very love, rest everything in His hands.

Our communions should be associated directly with the details of our lives. The Church, in certain all-important concerns, gathers her children to the Altar of their Lord, and seals their fellowship with Him as the essential condition of the new life or responsibilities which are to be assumed. Thus, for instance, the Church expects the Holy Sacrifice

to be offered in connection with the taking up of the holy estate of marriage; and she provides for the Offering at every Ordination to the Sacred Ministry. Again, It is offered in connection with the solemn Profession of those who embrace the Religious Life. So the daily Sacrifice should bring this to us all, as the great strength and joy of life: "*Lo, I am with you all the days.*" This is not the mere expression of sentiment, however holy, but the statement of fact which our Divine Lord has confirmed through the whole life of the Church, and confirms to each soul who is faithful in communion. Oh! that Divine Fellowship! We ought to seek to make it the great reality. We are not to talk vaguely of loving our Lord, or even of certain delight in prayer and service. Rather should we make fellowship with Him, a sweet, sure reality. Life, as we shall see, must rise to very severe tests of this fellowship and to very holy experience of it. We must begin with the proof of it in little things, and find its sweetness in the details of life, and then, when the greater demand comes, we shall be ready in the power of that consciousness to say, "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*"

2. *FELLOWSHIP IN SUFFERING*

There is no life without suffering; and fellowship with our Lord could not be the great joy that it is if it were not capable of realization

in our days of pain. Through fellowship in suffering the soul passes to a peculiar and very important knowledge of the Love of God. In fact, experience seems to show that apart from suffering we could not know the Love of God perfectly. Suffering has its own value, apart from the necessity of purification, in the proving of the Love of God.

Fellowship with Jesus enables us to understand our present earthly state as one of increasing light and glory through the working of Divine Love. The joy and peace and glow of the Sacramental Life, centering in the Love and Light of the Sacred Presence, gradually lead to deeper thoughts of life and of ourselves in relation to its consummation. One by one the deeper spiritual experiences expand into visions of Divine realities. Little by little our eyes are opened to Divine Beauty, as the Love of the Holy Spirit constrains us to tread the secret ways of God. Our communions, as they are made more lovingly, lead us into a holy consciousness of a spiritual state wherein we are being more surely established. We realize ourselves in fellowship with Jesus! We realize ourselves rightly then, for until we know what life means for us in union with the Beloved, we have not properly realized either ourselves or our life.

Rest a moment in that thought. We made our communion to-day, we are in Him and He in us. Every act, every thought and word must stand in particular relation to that holy indwelling.

How we shrink from the thought of it if we are conscious of wilful sin! How with every sin we seem to step back from peace, back from sustaining love, back from the rightful joy of life! Yes, even our sins may teach us. Conscience is a great instructor, as well as a faithful judge; and if we are feeling how sorely we are "let and hindered" by the sins we so easily commit, at least let us learn from them the truth about ourselves and the lofty pureness of the higher life which is set before us.

But this is only the negative side of our experience. There is yet the other side of positive experience, which is not without its difficulty. Some of its beauties we have already seen, and there are others to be considered; but now we must endeavour to trace them through the harder ways of suffering.

Consider the suffering everywhere made evident in the world, the sufferings of the body, the soul, the spirit, quite distinct one from another, and yet marvellously blended in one whole consciousness; and then trace this suffering through all its phases in physical pain, in crushing sorrows, and the hidden pain of the spirit. How dark is the shadow which suffering brings over the life! But see, it is darkness into which God Himself has entered. The darkness enveloping the Cross on Calvary seems but the concentration of all the shadows which suffering has cast over the world. Suffering!

It is our lot and portion, yet how we try to escape it! How we complain if it touches us! But is this right? Cannot we who are in fellowship with Jesus through the Blessed Sacrament adopt a holier, more reverent attitude towards pain in every form? Shall the Christ for very love of us enter the darkness of the Dereliction, and we shrink all unlovingly from contact with its shadow? Shall He compass with His Love the very limit of suffering, and we be afraid to trust His Love? No; but because we are one with Him we are to look upon suffering as being itself sacramental. Pain is to be met, accepted, used by the soul, but she must be filled first with love.

Two results will follow—(1) The acceptance of pain will become an act of love. It will be the soul's homage to the Beloved. So great is the glory of Love in Him, and so full of promise to the soul crowned through discipline, that the suffering seems little in comparison with that which awaits her. "*I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*" "*The glory which shall be revealed*" is, in part, the glory of love which has learned to accept and use the discipline of suffering. Thus wonderful is "the inward and spiritual grace" of the sacrament of pain. (2) There will be a new and deep experience or the soul of the interior joy of her Lord, of His

tender sympathy, of the intimacy of His Love. He is bearing in love with her, and with her looking on to the day when, in the great consummation, our pain and His Passion will be transfigured in Love. We should remember in times of suffering and difficulty that, because we are in union and fellowship with Christ, the end is as dear to Him as to us. He waits with us the perfecting of love through our pain.

If in fellowship with Jesus we feel the flow and energy of His Life and Love as the joy and inspiration of our own souls, can we look upon any suffering as otherwise than a deep mystery, hidden indeed from the unloving, but revealed in the beauty of Love to the wise hearted? Is it not a part of that Heavenly Wisdom which is spoken "*among the perfect*"? Can we wonder at the eagerness of the Saints in the day of suffering? Can we wonder when souls, growing in holiness and love, perceive its meaning and ardently desire it? Shall we doubt the wisdom of that spiritual reasoning which finds utterance within our own souls, when in the grace of the Divine Sacrament we are moved to holier courage, to more loving surrender, and a diviner willingness to suffer? Shall we regard these things as anything but the fruit of His Love in us, Who for our sakes accepted suffering and used it for our Redemption, and now for our sanctification leads us in the pathway of the Cross?—O Jesu, by Thy Cross and Passion,

deliver us from all unloving rejection of pain. Grant us in fellowship with Thee, to prove its worth in the knowledge of Thy Love.

3. *FELLOWSHIP IN SACRIFICE*

When we have learned to rejoice in the fellowship of Jesus in our suffering, we can scarcely avoid the consciousness of a particular demand which is made upon us. It is a demand at once imperative and tender. It is the demand of love. And if we perceive it as the demand of the Divine Love, no less is it the demand of love within our own souls, and we know that we can respond only in sacrifice. Now, there are few things in life so beautiful and ennobling as personal sacrifice. Some, indeed, are distinctly called to a life of sacrifice. Thus the call to the Religious Life is a call to sacrifice. The three-fold vows are but as a three-fold cord, binding the sacrifice which is offered continually. And where that life is taken rightly, what an ideal of sacrifice is presented! The life becomes both beautiful and noble, and the secret of all is sacrifice.

God Himself chose sacrifice as the means through which He would show the highest revelation of Love. The Incarnation, the Passion, were the visible acts of the self-sacrifice of God. The Blessed Sacrament remains for us the memorial of that act of Love. It is the lifting to God of the Memorial of His Own Self-Oblation in the Person

of the Incarnate Son. Our own union with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament involves us in a true participation in His Self-Oblation. We are to correspond in our own action with His Life of Sacrifice.

When we speak of Sacrifice, we mean not only, or particularly, some occasional act by which we give ourselves, our time, our means, or our pleasures. These may not be wanting even in lives which are not marked by true sacrifice. Sacrifice begins with the soul's personal surrender to the Beloved. This is an act of love. But to be sustained in that act, she finds she must give herself in suffering, in humiliation, in loneliness; she must be willing to be despised, thought little of, to be criticized, misjudged, misunderstood; she must give continually, hoping for no return; she must work, not looking for reward. Yea, in her own inner life with God, she must be willing to bear the pain of darkness, dryness, and weariness. She must be thus willing in the strength of love which is ever constant, ever prodigal of self in the service of the Beloved. Oh, how self-condemned we are in the mere statement of such a rule of sacrifice! Who of us can ever say we have attained to that? But is any other statement complete? It is only when we come to look into the real meaning of sacrifice, and trace it in its bearings, that we can possibly reach to such a rule. Surely One only has ever acted up to its lofty demands!

Only the Beloved Himself! And then when we think we can take one further step in the way of sacrifice, when by some act of loving response to the constraint of our Lord we are more separated and detached in heart, how lonely we feel! It is one of those subtle spiritual temptations which the enemy of our souls knows so well how to bring against us. It is thus he seeks to hurt the soul that is practising humility and endeavouring to live a life of sacrifice. After we have made some act of surrender, and really are in heart more separated, then he overwhelms us, or seeks to do so, with the sense of our own loneliness. "No one understands us," or "No one wants us;" we feel no one shares the life we live. So he would try and drag us back to the level from which we have been raised by our Lord Himself. In our loneliness we feel our weakness. We long for the peace and glory which we see beyond us, and we know that it is not for us save through the way of sacrifice. The old question of our Lord is repeated even to us, "*Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?*" Happy are we if we can say with the two brethren, "*We are able.*" It is ours to do all things in fellowship with Him. "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*"

This fellowship with our Lord must be our safety in the day of loneliness. Each act of sacrifice will spring from an interior sense of

union with Him, of love between us and Him; and so real will be the support of His Life that our sacrifice will be made without a thought of self, or of anything save the natural response of a loving heart. This at once, you see, removes out of our way that false idea of sacrifice, which would make it consist in a hard, cold act of moral duty. That would never ennoble a soul. Only sacrifice, which is the fruit of love, can ever rightly ennoble and beautify the soul.

Carry this conception of sacrifice into the days as they come. Think what communion will mean as the strengthening of that holy fellowship with the Beloved, in which our souls are moved in harmony with His perfect Life—one love, one will, one intention!

This we may take to ourselves, each one of us according to our vocation. Let us ask, "What is my vocation?" Every one should ask that question. Every one has a vocation, and response should be made as the call becomes clear. But response can only be perfected through sacrifice. In the home and in the cloister alike there is this demand; there is no escape from it. We cannot evade the law of sacrifice and retain the love.

But why do I suggest such a thought? We do not ask to escape it, we would not if we might; we would not, because we love. We could not while our love is being strengthened in fellowship with Jesus. We could not, with the Sacred Host in our

hands, fail of love's offering. We could not in the conscious union of our souls with our Lord ask for less than to be with Him, as in suffering, so in sacrifice. "*In whatsoever place my Lord the King shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will Thy servant be.*"

4. *LOVE'S REWARD*

Who can ever speak perfectly of the marvels of love which the soul experiences in this holy fellowship with the Beloved! The joy of that holy intimacy which He wills and which He foreshadowed in the words: "*He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him,*" surpasses all power of expression. We have known it in some well-remembered communion—perhaps in this day's communion. We have realized it in adoration in the sacred stillness of His Presence. We have felt His Love, infinitely tender and sweet, in the midst of suffering. We have felt Its uplifting power in sacrifice. We feel how marvellously He has rewarded our efforts in devotion and service. The reward of love is Love. And this reward is held out to all who will be truly loving in communion and faithful in fellowship with their Lord.

Consider, then, how this may be. Humbly, with the lowliness of reverent love, we come to our communions. We seek Him, the Beloved, with love that through repeated communions

grows stronger and more exalting; more understanding and more intelligent. There is a power of realization granted to the soul through repeated communions which seems to take her deeper and deeper into the mystery of the Divine Life given in the Blessed Sacrament. She begins to understand a little more of that which she reads in the Canticle, where the Beloved speaks to the soul: "*O My dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.*" Now therein is given a conception of life in union and communion with our Lord, which is exceedingly wonderful. There are two thoughts suggested which may well assist us in our communions. The one is that of being hidden in the Sacred Wounds of Christ; and the other is that of being built into the spiritual fabric of saintly life. So as we go forward in our communions, there must of necessity come to us a deep interior spiritual knowledge which is all our own, and which we can only share with our Lord. The devotion of our souls rises to adoration —"*My Lord and my God.*" And though our eyes are holden that we see Him not as some of the Saints have seen Him, we know His Presence, we are taken into its ineffable stillness, the very thoughts within us are hushed in the realization of His Love. The touch of the Beloved, the infusion of His graces, the breathing forth of His

Spirit, "the imparting of joys, the revealing of things hidden, and a certain wonderful, intimate, wholly ineffable mingling of the Heavenly light, which enlightens the soul."[1] This is what we know; and yet all words are too poor to express that which we know—"*My Lord and my God.*"

And yet lofty and beautiful as is the desire of the soul in her communion, she often realizes it more afterwards, when in conscious fellowship she realizes the truth of love between herself and her Lord, or when she may remain in the perfect restfulness of the Blessed Sacrament. Truly her love is rewarded, and Love is the reward. But this reward of love in fellowship with our Lord should not be made an exclusive joy. It must be given back, offered again, to our Lord as the highest offering of which we are capable. Our experience of love in Him is too often transient, because we are too eager to enjoy it ourselves. What! has our Lord so many to love Him that He can care but little for our offering! Oh, we should bring always to our Lord the very joy which He Himself gives us, offer to Him the very love which He has Himself infused, and we shall find it abundantly increased. He ever multiplies His favours to those who love Him unselfishly, self-forgettingly. No more perfect offering can be brought to our Lord than the love which He inspires.

Here we may notice a point in connection with

[1] S. Bernard.

this holy increase of love in ourselves. We must be active in that love; the more we know it, the more we know the Beloved, the more ready must we be in His service. At the Holy Sepulchre, S. Mary Magdalene had no sooner given proof of love than she was sent on an errand. When the holy Apostles had shown their gladness in the Risen Christ they received a commission.

Have we no call who have received so much from Christ? Each life will suggest an answer, which may be responded to in daily personal offering. Perhaps we may perceive higher and more perfect ways of showing the power of love, and exercise its sacred ministry for love of the Sacred Heart.

But at least one thought may be urged. Might we not do more to promote the glory of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament? Visions arise of what society might be if the Holy Sacrament were more generally reserved; if It were the Centre of Life round which the daily intercourse might move; if It were the Centre of peace in every place. If we but remembered more constantly those places where there is not the daily Offering, might we not by our prayers help them forwards? Might we not in our prayers desire before our Lord continually, that so far as it may promote His Honour and Glory, and our own love and devotion for Him, there may be the reverent Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, granted throughout the Church?

Fellowship with Jesus! How can we prove all that it is while the great mystery of His Love is presented day by day and so many heed it not! Truly great is our opportunity; great, therefore, is our responsibility. But love will fear nothing in the holy work, but will rise to great things for the glory of God.

The Life of Communion does, indeed, stand out in sharp distinctness from much in the life around us; and yet that is the ordained life for us. "*Abide in Me and I in you.*" Love alone can attain to it; love that is eager and sure. "*Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee.*" If our souls are rising in true aspiration to Him Who reigns in Heaven, we shall rise to Him no less as He comes to us day by day in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

MEDITATION VII

Of the Life of Communion (c)

1. *ITS HIDDENNESS*

"*Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself.*" So said the prophet to whom had been granted the vision of the Divine Glory. "*I saw the Lord sitting upon His Throne high and lifted up.*" At first sight there seems a contradiction in these two passages from the same prophet; but there is really no inherent contradiction, because to know anything of the Divine Glory, is to know also that hiddenness is a necessity in all Divine communications, for man cannot yet bear the full glory. And so throughout the spiritual history of mankind, we trace the hiding of God's Power from the irreverent gaze of the unprepared, the ignorant, the sinful; while yet it has been revealed to the simple, loving, believing soul, through the very symbols which veiled His Presence. All along there has been a preparation of mankind for the sacramental life of the Catholic Church. The Holy of Holies, symbol of the Incarnation, enshrined the Divine Presence. The Incarnation Itself was the veiling of the Divine Nature under the Humanity which the Son of God

assumed. His very teaching was, moreover, the veiling of Heavenly truth from the worldly wise, while it was the very imparting of Divine Wisdom to the simple. The Blessed Sacrament is marked by the same hiddenness. The Real Presence is the delight and consolation of the faithful, while the faithless, loveless soul sees nothing but an empty token of remembrance. Jesus is hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, veiled in His simplicity and humility, that we may the more easily approach Him.

But let us be mindful of the true majesty that is thus hidden. If we would love and adore our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, it must be through faith in the Real Presence: faith that grows more and more perfect with the deepening knowledge of the soul, as she understands more of the Lord she loves. If with loving belief we adore Him present, He will not fail to confirm our love and faith by a true inward showing of Himself; by granting a true inward spiritual perception of His Presence to which our whole being must respond. How gracious is that Presence of our Lord, hidden and yet known! What joy to perceive it, to know that it is ever with us, the Centre of peace and rest and sympathy to which we may turn through "*all the days*" of our life on earth, through all the days until He wills to be hidden no more from the souls who love Him! Oh, that hidden glory of His Love! What would life become if it were withdrawn!

Conceive of the emptiness of life without the Blessed Sacrament. Were it withdrawn, would it not be like a denial of the powers of our spiritual nature? If we might not hold, and rejoice in, the truth of the Catholic doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament, would not the whole Body of the Church suffer? Would there not be a weakening of her power in every direction? But from a picture so dark we turn away to rejoice in faith. He is present; our hearts know it; we worship and adore; we are with Him, and He is with us.

This hiddenness which we notice in the Blessed Sacrament passes into the life of the communicant. "*He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him.*" And so we have to consider the hiddenness of the spiritual life. We who are communicants should most lovingly correspond with this hiddenness of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The hidden life is of great power. The holiest of the Saints have been always those whose life has been most truly "*hid with Christ.*"

But let us trace, if we can, some features of the hidden life. We must dismiss at once every thought of its difficulty. There is great danger, and we know it, in contemplating the difficulties of our life. We are quite certain, and we have proved it again and again, how the contemplation of difficulties only makes them worse, or draws us into deeper mazes of spiritual trouble. We must,

therefore, leave all thought of difficulty when we come to consider such a question as this of hiddenness with Christ. Hiddenness in us begins in loving correspondence with our Lord's hiddenness in the Blessed Sacrament. He takes us into communion with Himself, and bids us thereby to enter into His hiddenness. If we think of Him hiding His Power within the soul's own life, still more are we to know that we are taken into His Life. "*Thou art a place to hide me in*," said the Psalmist. "Within Thy Wounds hide me," prays the soul from day to day. In this communion we are to find our joy, simple, personal, and intense, in the strong, immortal Love of Jesus. It is a joy secret, deep, and Divinely tender, and our first impulse is to seek it more and more consciously, making each communion a deeper reality and perfecting our sense of it by meditation. Whenever possible, we should give a few moments to meditation after our communion. It would deepen our sense of what we have received. We should realize more fully our possession in Christ. If we do this we shall come to seek it as the very life of our days, and so sweet and blessed will be the life of our souls in the Beloved, that most truly it will be "*hid with Christ*."

But what of the outer life? The very power to live it at all will consist in this hiddenness with Christ. There are brave, holy souls, full of brightness and joy, overflowing with charity and

sympathy, notwithstanding the ceaseless demands of work and duty. See those souls alone with their Lord. And yet we cannot see them; only He sees them and marks their lowly devotion, their utter surrender of all things, yea, their surrender of themselves in and through all things! Their fervent desires, the strong, brave love in which they meet Him, are not for our observation. We cannot look into those secret moments between such souls and their Lord; but we may be quite sure of this, that there is between Him and them the most wonderful recognition. There is, on their part, a strong, holy love with which they meet Him, conscious of all life's difficulties, and yet brave as they look up to Him to accept that which He brings to them, even the fulness of His Own supporting grace.

The true life is hidden, the world sees only the glow of a loving spirit; but He marks that strong, loving control with which they deliberately shut out the world that their communion with Him may be complete. The fire of love burns hiddenly. The hidden life is the strong life. No one who is called to live the Life of Communion but is called to live the hidden life; it is possible for every one of us.

We go further, and say that only in hiddenness can we prove either the strength, or the sweetness, of the Divine Love in that perfect degree which it is the purpose of the Beloved to reveal within the soul, when it is responsive to His

leading in the higher ways of love. We miss the holiest joy of the inner life until we have attained to this which is the very desire of our Lord for us.

2. *THE JOY OF THE INNER LIFE*

We have noticed that joy comes with the realization of the strong, immortal Love of Jesus in communion. We must consider it more closely. But as an experience, it is so interior, so entirely of the spirit, that all words concerning it must seem inadequate. Human language fails in the presence of a fact so beautiful. The joy we are considering is not an emotional joy, but a deep, full apprehension of life in God, Whose Love exalts our being. But again, within that very expression, what untold experience may be bound up! It is the joy of the soul within herself, as she understands what she is in the enfolding, protecting Love of God. Can we conceive of the joy of the Redeemer in His victory over sin, over death? Can we imagine His joy, His Divine satisfaction, in the soul's perfection? Can we conceive of His joy in communicating Himself to the soul, thereby rendering her but the more precious and lovable in His sight? Can we have any idea of the joy of His anticipation of the day when all the fruits of His Love shall be gathered in? Perhaps in meditation, or at the time of communion, or in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament, we do get glimpses of this joy of the Redeemer. It seems

to speak to us through the joy with which He ministers to our souls. He makes us glad in His Own joy.

Think of it now as joy on our account, yea, as joy which He communicates to us. And this suggests to us that the joy of the inner life is that which is ours in sympathy with our Lord. Oh, we should "*rejoice in the Lord*" because of our absolutions and communions, because of the fruit of graces abounding towards us; but we should also rejoice with the Beloved. We may be surprised at the expressions which very holy souls have permitted themselves to use in their prayer, such as the offering of congratulations to their Lord: "Lovingly I congratulate Thee," and such-like expressions. But there is nothing unreal in this, it is to be taken quite simply; the soul is trying to express to the Beloved the joy she feels on His account, and she feels it because she is in active union with Him. She knows that every good within herself is already His; every victory that has made her what she is belongs, after all, to Him. She looks around and sees the triumph of His grace in other souls, and rejoicing with Him she offers in all humility her congratulation of love.

All that our Lord has promised us in the Blessed Sacrament makes this loving congratulation a natural movement of love between us and Him. We cannot, however, rest at this point; there is a fact which lies within all that we have thought of.

I mean that degree of love which is known quite apart from all that He has done. When we have thought of Him as coming to us in the Blessed Sacrament, when we have thought of all His consolations, there is yet another fact which brings us to a conception of love altogether higher and more wondrously personal than anything we have yet touched upon. And that is the love we feel for Him in the most intimate, personal sense. When we have rejoiced in His word and His gift, when we have praised Him, thanked Him, there remains the pure worship, the deep, ineffable joy of love which He inspires by Himself alone. He is "*the chiefest among ten thousand.*" When we have looked upon His beauty, and adored Him in the unity of His perfections, we know that we can love no other. In pure devotion we must bear witness of Him: "*This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend.*"

This is the supreme joy of the Saints. It is the love in which the soul is united to the Beloved. How the Saints have tried to express their joy in this! How each one declares the truth, and yet owns the reality to be beyond their power to tell. S. Francis cries, "My God and my All," but those words of S. Francis fail utterly to express what he felt. He could not express in those words what our Lord was to Him, "My God and my All." The Bride, in the contentment of her being, says, "*My Beloved is mine, and I am His.*" And then our Lord says, "*If any man*

love Me he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him." There is the treasure of the Divine Life which the Saints have felt, and which filled them with joy. It was the filling up of their souls, their being, out of the fulness of the Divine Life.

And now, to turn our thought to the more strictly practical side of this experience, we are bound to own that this joy is not general. And the first reason is found in the fact that communions are made too much as ordinary details of our spiritual routine, without the effort to realize the life to which they lead us. Great as is the joy of the daily Eucharist; feeling, as we do, that we could not possibly do without It; ought we not to take warning to ourselves, lest we become too formal and take our communions too much as a detail of our daily devotional routine, and so miss a great deal of the strength and the power, of the love and the beauty, which should come into our lives from day to day? Are we never in danger of treating it coldly, with formality? Are we never in danger of thus spoiling the treasure of our inner life, of thus robbing our souls of the joy which is nearest on earth to the joy of Heaven? Our communions lead us to a closer life in God. It is not enough to look for the gain of communion in the outward tranquillity of life. We must seek and find it in the inward realization of life in God.

Then further, we need to exercise our souls in

all the ways of love, in the understanding of the life of union, with all that it assures to us, so that we may find the joy of God entering into our souls and filling them with joy. If His delight is to be with the sons of men, what wondrous ground of joy we have! It seems unnecessary here to say anything about the hindrances in the way of this joy—suffering, sorrow, perplexity, temptation—because though these exist in so many lives, the remedy lies in seeking the joy of the Divine union in the Blessed Sacrament and in all the ways of loving prayer. This we can do by most complete self-surrender, and faithful abiding in the Beloved. Whatever we may feel, our remedy lies in our own power. There is our communion, there is our daily attendance at the Eucharist, and if we understand rightly what the Holy Sacrament is to us, we shall rise more and more above our difficulties, and find, because of them, a deeper, truer joy in the Beloved.

3. *KNOWLEDGE IN THE INNER LIFE*

That intimate and personal love between the soul and her Lord, which produces such joy in the inner life, leads also to a very pure knowledge of God and of Eternal Life. The loving soul beholds her life in Christ, she sees it stretching out before her, opening into the "*far distances*" of the Divine Life. She sees the fulness and the beauty of all things are her own in Christ. With S. Francis she says, "God is mine, and all things are mine."

Consider how she attains to this. What "*treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" are hid for us in Christ, Who is Himself the Word, the Wisdom of God! There is the perfect knowledge of the Divine Love, for He is God; there is the most intimate knowledge of the human soul, for He is Son of Man; there is complete knowledge of all that is prepared for us in Eternity, for He is the Saviour to Whose Mind all things were open and clear in the day of His Passion; there is the most clear knowledge of the working of each soul in its relation to God, for He is the Beloved, the Desire of our souls. Think of Him in the tenderness of His Love, coming to us through the Incarnation, to bring to us the perfect knowledge of God. Think of that as a part of the Eternal purpose, that He should come to bring to us that perfect knowledge which the wisest of men had sought for and never had attained. Think of Him coming still in the Blessed Sacrament with all the Divine treasure of wisdom and knowledge; for in the Blessed Sacrament the powers of our Lord are not diminished. Oh, how near we are to all that our souls long for! He comes to impart to us, according to our need and according to our love and our seeking, the saving knowledge of the Divine Love.

In our communions we are made partakers of His Nature, and if we respond simply and lovingly we find, indeed, that our knowledge of Him becomes more and more intimate and sure. We may venture

to speak of it as infused knowledge. It is knowledge imparted to us through our union with Christ, and not something which we simply learn in the ordinary or natural way. Sometimes it is perceived in some clearer knowledge in matters of faith, a finer perception of some Divine Mystery; or again, it may be perceived in a growing understanding of the spiritual life, while all our thoughts are centred in Him. For this reason we find meditation after communion, or in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament, so full of joy and blessing to our souls. Oh, the gladness of truth, the joy of certainty, which the soul experiences when thus with her Beloved she enters into the treasure of His Divine Life! It is not that we ourselves perceive it all alone and enjoy the beauty of spiritual knowledge, as a traveller might explore the recesses of a beautiful country; rather it is that we rejoice with our Lord, for we realize nothing apart from Him.

We can never pass beyond this joy; it is renewed in us again and again, and with ever higher joy as the soul advances in the way of union. The soul enjoys no spiritual gift apart from her Lord; it is her joy to have it all in Him. All the gifts of the Divine Knowledge combine to make the love between the soul and Christ more wonderful and blessed. "All the marvels and magnificence of God infused into the soul, issue in but one fruition and joy of love." And if, in the midst of all this interior joy, the soul praises, as indeed she

must praise Him, her very acts of praise, celebrating His perfections, do but answer to the joy which is eternal in the Godhead, and through each word she gains inspiration.

> "O God, most beautiful, most priceless One,
> O God, most glorious, uncreated One,
> O God, Eternal Beatific One,
> O God, O Infinite and hidden One,
> O God, Immense, O God the living One,
> Thou Wisdom of the Everlasting Son,
> Thou ever-loved and ever-loving One."

In such acts as these we may breathe out to Him the love of our hearts, renewed in the knowledge of His perfections from day to day; the words are plain and simple, but within them lies the secret of some of our deepest perceptions and intuitions. We utter them knowing within ourselves the wonder of that joy which comes forth to us from the Heart of God.

Can we make our communions more really the occasions of this deep knowledge? Are we too busy, too hurried in life, to stay restfully in our communions? They should be recalled in the stated times of prayer and remembered for the light they bring, and we shall not be without the gladness of growing knowledge. And let us remember that where the soul is surrendered to her Lord and her desire rises up to know as she is known, to love as she is loved, He does meet her. It is not a question of *time*, but of intensity of purpose. We shall be more ready to preserve the inner

sanctity of our soul as the Garden of God, wherein all is kept for the glory of the Beloved.

4. *THE "GARDEN ENCLOSED"*

In Holy Scripture the faithful soul is compared to a garden. "*Their soul shall be as a watered garden.*" And most expressly in the Song of Songs, "*a garden enclosed is My Sister, My Spouse.*" The Bride-Soul, hearing this, says, "*Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.*" And this is followed by the words of the Beloved, "*I am come into My garden, My Sister, My Spouse.*"

Now, "*a garden*" suggests to us the thought of productiveness, of beauty, of delight, of refreshment. It is therefore a most beautiful image of the soul, with her wonderful interior life, its graces and gifts. We have seen that, both in joy and in knowledge, the soul is at one with her Lord. And most naturally does she desire to preserve them for His greater glory.

"*A garden enclosed.*" By the term "*enclosed*" is to be understood the protection of peace. So the Apostle says, "*the Peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus.*" When we are in peace, we can enter into the joys of devotion and communion, and our care should be to preserve this well, so that the garden of the soul may be kept for the

Beloved. Within that garden all the graces flourish under the care of the Holy Spirit. This is why the soul prays, "*Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.*" The Wind and the Spirit are one. How brave she is! She prays for the wind of trial and for the times of refreshing; not for the times of refreshing alone, for they alone would not perfect her. She knows that graces cannot be perfected if there be no discipline, and she desires to have them all, that the Beloved may enter and delight in her. "*Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.*" "But when it has come—when the species have been brought to perfection, when humility, obedience, and purity and love have been called forth—then, '*Let my Beloved come into His garden.*' *Mine* when it was neglected, deserted, barren: *His,* when the soft breezes and dews have aroused it to life: *Mine,* in its unprofitableness and sterility: *His,* in its fertility and plenty."[1]

That is what we desire, do we not, in our communions, that our Lord may come and find the soul ready for Him, and saying within herself, "*Let my Beloved come into His garden*"? And if there be diligent co-operation with the Holy Spirit, alike in discipline as in consolation, who shall worthily describe the spiritual beauty of the soul? There the fairest graces may spring up in fragrance and

[1] Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 201.

beauty. There may be the most perfect joy in union with our Lord. True, the picture seems to us an ideal one; but when God Himself exalts the soul, what may we not expect? He exalts the soul to make her more worthy of His Own Love, and He delights in her the more for all His gifts. "*My delights were with the sons of men.*" He in us and we in Him, so are we to know the perfection of the Divine Love.

We are not to limit, even to our own selves, the possibilities of the Love of God within us. We are not to say "this or that cannot be in me," because all these things which are produced within the soul, as the garden of God, are from Him, and not from the soul alone. And if in this present life, then most certainly in the life to come. Some souls do seem, indeed, to advance very far in the way of perfection; they seem very highly favoured in their spiritual life; their joy in their communions is almost beyond credibility by ordinary communicants; but those rare cases are, after all, but indications of what God wills to be perfected in all faithful souls. Whether we know it or not for ourselves now is not the question; we are to be careful so to live that our Lord Himself may perfect what He has begun, and to look forward to the day when we shall offer to Him our hearts' devotion in completeness.

What a high and holy estimation of communion must we not have, if this is to be the joy with which

our Lord visits us! But there is yet a thought to arrest us. For whom is all this to be sought? Oh, how often our communions are made with little thought beyond ourselves! But surely, if what we have considered be true, our communions should be made with the holiest desire that He may be satisfied. "*Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.*" There is, then, a certain measure of satisfaction, which our Lord Himself comes seeking. Yes, we should certainly seek to have our souls ready, not only to be satisfied in Him, but that He also may be satisfied in us. Oh, let us go a step further than that—lose the thought of self, and seek only to give glory to the Beloved. He will not let us lose the joy, because we seek it all for Him. He will not withhold the rich treasures of His Love from the soul that is wholly surrendered in her service of love.

There is the discerning of a great ideal, Jesus glorified in the Holy Eucharist! Would that souls could rise to this, and give themselves definitely to it in a life of devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The end of all effort in the Life of Communion is to exalt Him. If this be realized, then, both in the present and in the future, the soul, the Church, will find His joy imparted. "*I am come into My garden, My Sister, My Spouse: I have gathered My myrrh with My spice, I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey: I have drunk My wine with My milk: eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O Beloved.*"

MEDITATION VIII

Of the Blessed Sacrament as the Bond of Catholic Life

1. *THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH, AS OF THE SOUL, IS THAT OF CHRIST*

We have tried to understand what the life and the joy of the communicant may be. And how very wonderful and beautiful it appears to us! It becomes to us yet more wonderful and more beautiful as humbly, lovingly, we wait in devotion for our Lord to reveal Himself within our own souls, imparting to us a deeper sense of the Divine Beauty of His Own Life. But, after all, although we do thus perceive the glory and the richness and the beauty of our life in Him, we have to remember that we are but units in the multitude; we are severally members of the Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ.

The next step, after realizing the Life within ourselves, is to realize it also in the Body. This suggests a Catholic Ideal, which we may think is too far distant for us to contemplate. The Ideal of unity, within which all the schisms known to us now might be healed, seems to us a dream almost

impracticable. It is too sadly true that the Ideal is a distant one, but we are bound to set it before us, because it is the Will of Christ, Who is Himself the "*Head of the Body.*" Day by day there goes up before the Altars of the Church the prayer for unity; and whatever may be our disabilities in other ways, at least we are called upon to live so as to make for unity. We cannot, it may be, do much to heal any of the schisms existing, but we can live in such a way as to make for unity. That may be the tendency of our lives. We can, at least, recognize in others the Life in which we are ourselves rejoicing. The supernatural life of the individual passes into the supernatural life of the Church. The Blessed Sacrament is the means for the maintenance of this Bond. We have only to look at the Liturgy to see that the life contemplated is not simply that of the individual, but of the whole Church. In no office of the Church is the idea of the whole Body brought out more distinctly than in the Liturgy.

It is necessary to think of this, because we have duties, first of all, to those who, with ourselves, are rejoicing in the Life. That life abounds according to the degree of love in each soul, and this love, which is in each, should draw us together in true, holy sympathy. The Life of God is one. The Love of God is one. The Life, the Love in all souls is but one; the sympathies of souls through the Blessed Sacrament are but as vibrations in the

endless current of His Life. Sympathy is thus the expression, through human souls, of the strong, tender, supporting Love of Jesus. Sympathy is not a mere exhibition of feeling, however kind may be the intention which prompts it. Sympathy is the going out of love, the giving forth of love, in a way which is impossible apart from the soul's life in God. There are some souls naturally capable of showing sympathy, and we find them even among non-Christian people; but we are bound to consider now what sympathy means to us who are nourished continually by the Precious Body and Blood of Christ.

The joy of the soul in communion is never so bright as when we not only realize the Divine Love within ourselves, but also feel that it is active within us for the comfort or the brightening of some other soul. The very fact that we are giving forth the light which we have received only enhances the glory of it. How glorious would be the life of the Church if this were the constant realization of her life! How quickly her wounds would be healed! How clear would be her witness before the world! As our Lord shed His Blood from all His members for all His members, so His Love is declared; it goes forth to embrace all His members equally, that, being so embraced, they may become united in one. For this He prayed, "*that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us.*"

Such considerations as these must affect us in our daily life. By nature, by force of circumstances, some souls are very much shut in upon themselves. Disappointed in their surroundings, and finding no sympathy, they have altogether ceased to concern themselves with other people. Complaining of the lack of sympathy, they become themselves the more unsympathetic. But to one who knows the sympathy of the Beloved, it should not be hard to show sympathy. Certainly, we can only get it by first of all giving it. It becomes a very serious thought for us, when we are tempted to complain, how far are we receiving in ourselves the consequences of our own unsympathetic ways? Let us but recognize that it is the Love of God that we are to show, the Life of God by which we live; and how quickly the hard, cold selfishness and exclusiveness disappear in us, in the light of Divine Charity.

And then, further, we have a duty towards those who, while professing to be Christians, are not communicants, and therefore not living in the power of the Sacramental Life. We cannot ignore the fact that a large number of people are living without the Sacraments. Whatever may be the underlying reasons for their attitude, this at least is certain, they are rejecting the Divine Ideal of Christian life,[1] often, alas! in favour of merely human standards.

[1] Cf. Moberley, *Atonement and Personality*, chap. xii.

The duty before us is so consistently to live the Sacramental Life, as to exhibit its beauty, its strength, its joy, and its inherent grace of sympathy. It is not so much argument as conduct that is needed. No words can be as forceful as the living presentation of a high and noble conception of the Sacramental Life. We must not merely seek to persuade, we must pray. And this only suggests again the need of very earnest and faithful devotion to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, both in order to strengthen the life of the soul and of the Church, and also to make intercession more powerful and prevailing.

There is a danger of too great contentment with our own spiritual advantages and surroundings; but He Who has called us, Who renews His Own most sacred Gift so frequently to us, also called us as members of a Body, and that Body is His Own, and in Him we are "*members one of another.*" It becomes for us a very serious consideration how far that external coldness of life which we perceive in the world around us, that distance from God, that indifference to holy things, that flippancy which marks so much of the tone of society here and there, may be attributed to the lack of sustained sympathy, through the life which is ours in union with our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

2. *THE ACTIVITIES OF JESUS THROUGH THE CHURCH*

The Christian ideal of living is expressed by S. Paul, "*I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*" It belongs to the highest experience of the soul in union with her Lord. But though it raises our thoughts in contemplation of a degree of union and transformation into the likeness of Jesus to which we have not yet attained, it is to be realized more and more as the fact in all that we do, and in all that we are striving to become. Our Eucharists should make this a very holy reality. We feel it is our greatest joy in service or work to know that Christ is working. There is no joy that we can feel in our own successes which can equal our joy for His sake, that this or that effort has been blessed and that He is glorified. This joy increases as His work is magnified in us. Our own experience should help us here. Our happiest moments of life with Him are those which are associated with the consciousness of His Own activities within our souls and by means of our lives, when we know that He is taking us, using us, glorifying Himself in His Love by means of us. Our communions from day to day establish our souls in that state wherein this joy should become habitual. This grace of our communions should enable us to undertake our duties with true ability, and yet through all to say again with

S. Paul, "*I laboured . . . yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me.*"

From this thought of the life of Jesus in us we pass naturally to that of the Church and the true idea of life in her as the "*Body of Christ.*" Our Lord continues, through the Church, the activities of His Own Life. By Him she lives, by Him she is endowed with all the graces of His Own Incarnate Personality; on the one hand most tenderly human, as she deals with the erring, the suffering, the sorrowful; on the other hand Divinely spiritual, as she declares with all authority the word of life, the Divine Wisdom. The Church is in the world in this twofold nature; and because of it, like her Divine Head, she suffers. If she is like Him in her attitude towards the world, she is like Him also in her suffering. Well would it be for souls, well for the Church, if this necessary conformity to the Passion of the Beloved could be seen as the very sign that we are His! If, for example, in our own lives, as we suffer by ourselves, or as we suffer as partaking of the sufferings of the Church, we could remember that these things are necessary to our perfect conformity to our Lord, and regard it as a sign that we are His, how precious our pain would become!

But again, virtue goes forth from the Church for the healing of the world. As from our Lord virtue went forth to heal and bless in the days of His work on earth, so now there is the going

forth of virtue for the healing of the nations according to the fulness of His Life in the Church. If we could but rise to a true estimation of the glory of our Lord's Mystical Body, and of the power she possesses, what might not be the result in the world! But we can never properly estimate the glory or the power, except through a deeper understanding of the Sacramental Life, and of the glory of that Divine Mystery that is being perpetually celebrated.

The Church lives by the power of Christ in her. This makes the life of the Church to correspond with the Incarnate Life of Jesus; that is, it has both its manward and its Godward aspects. The Church goes out to mankind in the ministries of love, as she interprets to the world the Life of Jesus. She looks up to God in worship and prayer. But as these do but express the two parts of the Christian's life, we will rather consider them in that personal sense, since the Church's Ideal is only realized through the devotion of her members.

First, each of us has to show the life of Christ in the world. He is in us. His Love, His Sympathy, His Tenderness are to be seen in us. Oh, it is not easy so to lose the consciousness of self, that only the Beloved shall be known and understood through our conduct and speech. It is, we must own, the hardest part of our Christian life to be so utterly lost to self that He only may be manifested

through us. The very thought of what is possible, and of our failure in attaining to it, is enough to humble us to the dust. We recall our failures after communion, and we wonder if ever we shall by our lives interpret to the world His Life. Yes, and we shall do it more by showing how His Life and Love are triumphing in us, over our faults, than by a life which we might ourselves judge to be perfect. Be encouraged in patient endeavour. How often have we reproached ourselves for our failure to show a consistent life! How often have we reproached ourselves because of our imperfections, and we have thought, "I can do nothing; my life is all useless, worthless. If I were perfect as the Saints, I might do good!" We must never so deceive ourselves. Our witness is to be the witness of the Love of God, the Life of God, triumphing in us. Souls will be won because they see light rising over the darkness in our lives, over the sin, over the lovelessness, over the unsympathetic ways of our life; and they will see that the grace by which we live is the power gained and renewed in our communions.

And next, we have to be looking ever forward in true prayer and worship. That beauty of soul, that power of sympathy, that gentleness, that strength by which the soul shows the reality of the Life of her Lord, is gained in prayer and true, loving worship. Communion with God is the beginning of every grace which makes and adorns

the saint. Yes, communion not of thought, not of love only, but of all that can be understood of life. And more, it is not by our own life in the poverty of its natural state, but by the life which has been touched by the Divine, that we shall both witness to the world in love, and worship our God in sincerity and truth.

3. *UNITY OF THE CHURCH MILITANT WITH THE CHURCH EXPECTANT*

"I believe in . . . the Communion of Saints," is the profession which we make from time to time. When we can rise in thought to the grandeur of that article of the Faith, how beautiful appears the life of the Body, the Church! From the hardness and discipline and persecution of the world, it reaches to the Light of the Glory of God. It ever moves towards that Light, for the spring of our life is Divine. She lives because of Christ: "*Because I live, ye shall live also.*" It would strengthen and encourage us if we would recognize this at all times and live as children of Heaven; if we would more and more become detached from the world and in all things live as becomes the children of Light, the children of Heaven, the children of God. Think of those holy ones, "*the Saints in light.*" How intensely they realize the truth of life in Jesus! On earth they knew Him in that union which is permitted to the faithful here; they knew Him in the Holy Sacrament of His Love; their

life here grew more and more into the ideal: "*I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*" And now they know it with only one step between them and the completest joy, the final victory of the Church and the gathering of all the faithful in Christ.

And we think further of the souls beyond the veil who are dear to us. And no one of us can say, "I have no one there." That one, surely, would be exceedingly poor who could say, "I am alone in the universe of God, I have no one beyond the veil to pray for me." But to have one there is to have one link with Paradise, a link with the "*just . . . made perfect,*" a link of imperishable life. How the Church is enriched when God calls a faithful soul away! Thus one by one, moment by moment, the Church Expectant is gathering strength; not only strength of life, but a strength of hope, a strength of expectation. And how, again, when one is called from ourselves, our own treasure of life there is increased! How every one of the links broken in this world is but transferred to the next, and binds our souls more strongly to the Throne on High! If our love be true and strong, because above all things it is centred in Him Who is "*our Life;*" if our sense of life in the Body of Christ be clear and sustaining; if our faith be strong because we know God, then the natural sorrow which we feel when one is called from our sight is glorified, and we can wait in the confidence of love, strong for love's sake to live our life,

because only the bravest life can be worthy of immortal love. We feel, if our life is worth anything, it must not be spent in aimless, fruitless mourning and grieving; but rather in the exercise of our soul's powers, bravely for our Lord's sake, and also for the sake of those who, in larger life and clearer vision, see, more deeply than we can see, into the heart of things. And if we look above ourselves; if we question the Saints; if we question our own who are there: do they desire with us *"the Day of the Lord"?* Do they wait in expectation the day of our perfection? We understand their answer in the words which S. John heard, *"How long, O Lord?"* Thus between the Church Militant and the Church Expectant there is this ceaseless intercourse of love which, though it seems so silent, is throbbing and pulsing through the whole Body, and the centre of its energy is the Heart of the Beloved.

See, now, in the Blessed Sacrament this unity of life. He Who is the Life and Joy of the Church Expectant, is also the Life and Joy of the Church Militant. In giving Himself to us in Communion, He brings together the seen and the unseen. Every time the Holy Sacrifice is offered there is a fresh proclamation of His grace and a new thrill of His Love through the entire Body. Not through the life on earth merely, but through that expectant life in the Saints on high. While in the Holy Eucharist we lift up our hearts and unite ourselves

with the Church Expectant, they in turn are gladdened in expectation.

Sometimes in meditation we may come very near to the realization of joy with those whom we love there; but that thought must be left for our own quiet moments. It is enough now to emphasize the reality of life and joy as between the seen and the unseen. Every Eucharist, every prayer for the departed, every act by which we unite ourselves with the waiting Church, should make our lives braver and stronger beneath the burden of the days. It ought to bring us a very deep realization of the joy beyond, and add to our lives here something of the brightness which belongs to the other side, the brightness of that day for which we wait. It must become to us, as days go on, a matter of loving concern, and that increasingly. We want to realize the oneness of our life in Christ and the power of that love from which nothing can separate either us or those we love. We find that life and love centralized for us in the Blessed Sacrament. Indeed, more and more, as we enter into the heart of things, we find that we touch the soul of all things in the Blessed Sacrament. There is Christ; there, in Him, is light and understanding and love.

If, beyond ourselves, we can look into the lives about us and observe the sorrows of the world, we shall see at least one reason why we should cling to every fact of our highest life in God. The world cries out for sympathy, and hearts are failing

because they do not find it. It does not, perhaps, seem to us always manifest that this is true; but I think the more we go beneath the surface of life and understand the varied wants and the varying moods of those with whom we come in contact, we must feel that there is a deep yearning for sympathy, hardly understood even by those who are suffering most the want of it. The sympathy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is that which we are proving through the love which binds us still to those who have gone before us. In the power of His Love we can be strong, sympathetic, true; and we shall lift up above the world's shadows the light of a better hope, yea, of more than hope, the light of Eternal truth. We shall bring into the lives about us the evidence of a love which is Eternal and strong, as God is strong.

4. *CONFIDENT WAITING*

The Church waits for the Day of Consummation; and of the Church we may say that she waits in confidence. She knows her Lord's Mind and Will; she is one with Him in the purpose of His Love. But the same confidence needs to become a more definite mark of our personal life. The light of the glory beyond should already be streaming upon our path; the eyes that watch for that day should reflect the light; ours should be, indeed, confident waiting. Who would not be confident when the witness of love is ceaseless within the

soul? Who in the gladness and patience of love will not make answer to the promise of her Lord, "*I go to prepare a place for you. . . . I will come again and receive you unto Myself*"? Who would not make answer to that promise by rising up in the gladness of holy expectation and confident waiting, because of the love wherewith we are bound to our Lord and Saviour?

Consider the glory which is ours, kept for us against that day. This is the end of all discipline. Little by little the Divine Likeness has been developed as discipline has been accepted in the spirit of love, and with a ready will to be conformed to the Image of Jesus Christ. There is the result of all learning. "*Line upon line, here a little and there a little*," we have learned the truth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He has led us by loving ways to apprehend the Divine Wisdom, and so has prepared us for the deeper learning of the mysteries of love in the Blessed Sacrament on earth and the Beatific Vision in Heaven. There is the realization of every holy intuition. We know here how much our personal sense of God is aided and strengthened in moments of intuitive perception. We feel that what we do know really of God is that which we have received through those moments, brief, but intensely real and sweet, of intuition.

When—which God grant—we are permitted to behold Him in His Divine glory, all that we have

so understood will be seen no longer as in scattered beams of the glory of the Divine Life, but cohering in the vision of the Divine unity. There, moreover, is the fulness of that life which is being built up by our communions. Only recall what they have been in past days; what in the mercy of God they will continue to be. Think of all that joy and sense of rest and spiritual power, realized for ever in the soul's conscious likeness to her Lord. We may believe that there will be for us a peculiar joy and sense of strength in our conscious likeness to our Lord. That likeness could not be hidden from us there. Here for a while, it is better, perhaps, that it be covered beneath the veil of humility. There, there will be no need to veil from the soul her own likeness to her Lord. Will it not rather assist us in our praises, will it not magnify our love towards Him, to know that through His very love in us we have been conformed to His Likeness? Think of that consciousness itself breaking in upon the soul, at the moment of Divine Welcome, as she awakes to the knowledge of her own beauty, and in the joy of it offers herself more perfectly in adoration and worship. Think of the utter surprise of the soul, waking after the likeness of her Beloved! It is for all this that the Holy Church waits confidently. The blessed consciousness and joy of the souls who have attained to perfection, the holy raptures of the Saints, seem, as it were, to thrill through the whole Church and animate

the struggling souls on earth. We look up, each one, in the confidence of love, knowing the glory that will be, and so we share to the full the holy consciousness of the Church, as day by day she lifts up the great oblation. Day by day she "*shows forth the Lord's Death*," and renews her confidence, and so will she do "*until He come.*"

How could souls be dull and earth-bound before whom so grand and holy a future is spread forth! Ours is confident waiting indeed. We feel the certainty of all through the unfailing witness of love within the soul. We are glad, for He wills that we should be so. Oh, in the daily life the gladness of our souls in Christ ought to be more and more evident! Gladness is strength and health to the soul. "*I will be glad and rejoice in Thy Mercy.*"

May we not hope for some increase of this in the days to come? Life must hold for every one the hope of days yet to be brightened by communion. Every day ought to be brightened with the hope of our next communion, and it ought to be, moreover, a source of consolation to us if on any given day our communion seems less glad, less full, less uplifting; for to-morrow, if we are careful in our preparation, we may find that which to-day we were not quite ready for, and so the life of gladness becomes a progressive life. Life must hold for every one the hope of days yet to be brightened by communion, times of glad uplifting

in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Each of these may be made effectual in the increase of joy in the certainty of that which is to be. And though love be eager and desire strong and earnest as we wait for that Day, we shall learn patience. "*Be patient, therefore, unto the coming of the Lord.*"

We shall be patient. The love that is eager, because of its very intensity, will learn also to be most patient. Sometimes we may feel that the eager desire of our souls for that which lies beyond will carry us so far forward that we may be in danger of losing patience. Only let us remember that this patience which is demanded of us is but a form of sacrifice which becomes, in its turn, the very proof of that love which at other times breaks forth with almost over-eagerness. And so, let us learn patience. As we learn to love, our patience, through love, will become a true and acceptable sacrifice.

MEDITATION IX

Of the Eternal Value of Communion

1. *DECLARED BY OUR LORD*

The Life of Communion is nothing less than an open acknowledgment, and even a declaration, that we are living for Eternity. The Food by which we live is Divine and Heavenly, not earthly. Of course the whole Christian life is a declaration of that same kind; but the communicant is by profession taking a more interior view of that very position. We are by nature spiritual; we know it, and we know, moreover, that our own spiritual life will not, because it cannot, be perfectly realized in the terms of our present existence. We are perpetually witnessing to ourselves that the present life does not and can not hold all we long to have. We wait for a promised state of glory, of power, and of love; a state of life made perfect. We hope for "*glory and immortality.*" Every spiritual act, every movement of our spirits, is related to that future condition. They are efforts of the spirit becoming more and more inwardly conscious of true life through the exercise of love.

This is true of every devotional act and every effort after righteousness.

But the Sacraments go beyond all other acts in that they are "effectual means of grace." They increase the spirit's powers with gifts from the Divine fulness. They enrich the life. They raise the spirit and bring her nearer to her proper state. They unite her to God. The Sacraments stand in direct and wonderful relation to our Eternal Life. But the Holy Eucharist stands highest in this respect, since it is the continual source of life in Christ. Our Lord Himself declared this in His very first teaching concerning the Divine Sacrament. "*This is the Bread which cometh down from Heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living Bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever: and the Bread that I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. . . . Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. . . . This is that Bread which came down from Heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead; he that eateth of this Bread shall live for ever.*"

In these utterances we see very plainly the mind of our Lord as to the eternal value of our communions; and we must beware of ever lowering His teaching. Their effects will be seen in the Resurrection, and therefore in the life after the Resurrection. We need not speculate upon

the effects of bad communions; a bad communion is self-condemned. It will be sufficient to notice here that carelessness about our communions is nothing less than a misuse of the gift of life. And it is a misuse which becomes more deeply sinful as we understand more deeply the nature of the gift. Hence the Life of Communion should be, in respect of that gift of life, marked by a growing carefulness, the carefulness of reverent love. So to misuse the gift of life is to spoil our own souls of their proper glory hereafter. But to use the gift rightly is to enhance that glory. Good communions bear their fruit unto life eternal; but again, we cannot speculate about their effects. We may only take our Lord's words as implying that one result at least is the sacred gift of Immortality; and as we try to contemplate that gift, and the beauty of the soul in whom it will be seen in that day, we perceive that the soul will have a peculiar likeness to her Lord. The graces developed in her will be the evidence of union, established through the Blessed Sacrament and perfected through the practices of a holy life. Those practices, of course, will lead upwards to that transformation of love into the Likeness of Jesus. The graces and glories of the Incarnate Lord will be reproduced in the souls of the faithful, according to the degree of their own correspondence with His Love at all times. We see this in the Saints. As in them has been realized

the saying of S. Paul, "*I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,*" so they have shown a true likeness to their Lord, a likeness which has been more or less apparent even to their enemies.

In the life to come, no doubt, one chief occasion of joy and mutual love among the Saints will be that very likeness to their Lord. We can understand, can we not, a joy amongst the Saints themselves at the evidence in each other of the power of Jesus Christ, and because of the likeness presented in each one to their common Lord Whom they love. Yes, and one chief source of our own deep joy in the Beloved will be the consciousness that He has loved us so much as to make us what we are. We shall never for an instant forget the wonder of that Gift, that Self-communication whereby He has made us to live. "*As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.*"

Here it is a joy to feel the power of His Life, to feel that we are living because of Him; but what words could convey the truth of that joy as we shall know it in all the fulness of Eternal Life, beyond the possibility of invasion from the world, beyond the possibility of its being marred by anything of the world? What thought could reach so far as the realization of that gladness of adoration which we shall know when we can offer the love of our souls made glorious in His Own Likeness?

For a while we must be patient through all the

yearning of our souls for that day, remembering that the joy is not only prepared for us, but that it is also being prepared for by us, while we are using aright the Gift of Life in the Blessed Sacrament and waiting the promise of our Lord, "*Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*"

2. *UNDERSTOOD WITHIN THE SOUL*

We ponder the words of Jesus, and understand that our communions should lead us on to the realization of a very loving purpose of God in the life to come. Day by day, as the interior life of our souls is illumined and enriched through communion, or the contemplation of the Real Presence, we must perceive the eternal value of communion to ourselves. It is borne in upon the soul herself what her communions mean in relation to Eternity. Not always, of course, in words which she could reproduce to another; but in that innermost consciousness in which she lives with God. We feel the reality of that wondrous relationship established and developing between Christ and ourselves. We know and feel the Divine Presence in the Blessed Sacrament in higher ways as the days go on, and we know that this is not because of anything that we do; we cannot force lit, it is given to us, and we know it. This, with all our joy in it, belongs to our eternal state. It

comes to us out of that state, a recognition, as it were, of the soul in her aspiration. And further, that which we realize in the Divine Presence is felt to be our true life. How often have we felt in and immediately after our communions that we have touched more than the border-land of our true life! To return again to the necessary occupation of the days appears as a descent from our true life to the concerns of a world towards which we are feeling a more and more remote affection.

This must be so, for we cannot touch the Divine Reality in the Blessed Sacrament so often, and not find our affections more and more drawn to the infinite treasures of love displayed to us, and to the joy of the life which is opening to us.

How attractive it all is! Every movement of love, every act of devotion or sacrifice, the very discipline of our days, carries us into that life. We are separated, detached from old ways and attractions, not because they are no longer capable of giving us pleasure, but because love impels us towards that better part which we have come to know as the reality of life. We have no quarrel with the really innocent ways around us, but we recognize a larger life, a Diviner claim, and we must give ourselves to it. We shall do this the more as we understand through communion the greatness of our life in Christ. We are "*complete in Him*," and the course of our spiritual life leads to the understanding of that as the most beautiful

of facts. How winning it is in its beauty, how satisfying in its fulness, how sustaining in its strength! Let us but respond to the life so manifested, and each communion will become more precious in the increase of holy joy and confidence. We shall know the joy of that which is assured to us in Christ, and in feeling the power of His Life we shall be confident. "*I can do all things through Christ Who strengtheneth me.*"

The joy set before us will be won through the realization of His abiding strength. Feeling it as the inspiration of work and effort, how shall we not seek to make the words of the Apostle true of ourselves, "*I can.*" How have we acted in the past? After communion, how often have we said, "I can *not*"? We have not said it, perhaps, at all times in words, though the words have all too frequently been in our thoughts; but the whole attitude of our spirits has been one of antagonism towards the difficulty we feel—"I can not." As God looks upon us, as our Lord Who has come to us, sees through our life and traces the attitude of our spirits, He sees there the soul's despairing thought—"I can not." And how often we have said it, and in hopelessness and despair have shut out the holy thought to which the Presence and gift of our Lord had aroused us. But in the indulgence of such thoughts we do but consent to our own weakness; and that becomes sin against grace.

Let us be true to our communions, and make them effectual by responding in faith. The soul that believes is steadfast and confident. The word of the Eternal is sure; we can "*trust and be not afraid.*" Let us be true also in love. To love is to be strong. Love is the very secret of union with Jesus. To rest in His Love is to rest upon the Sacred Heart. Who that so loves could be afraid or doubting? Who that so loves would permit the thought, "I can not"? Feeling that love, we would say rather, "I can."

Again, let us respond in humility. Only the humble can dare to be confident. Pride is ever weak; pride hurries the soul into ways of weakness, wherein she loses more and more the Divine strength. He is all. We can realize that truth in its blessedness as we are ourselves humbled. Only, let humility be the self-effacement of pure love, in the desire that He may be the sole exalted One. Oh, even after our communions it is not always easy! How often the "I" slips out in our conversation; rises up in our thoughts; is emphasized in our plans! But that very attitude of egoism is weakness. No one can ever give way to that all too frequent insinuation of self without the greatest danger of losing the grace of communion.

Humility is the distinguishing grace of the loving soul. Faith and love and humility lead to the holiest confidence. "*I can do all things through Christ.*" Only consider what that implies. We are

confident now, we shall be confident always, because of all that we know is ours in Him. We fight our battle, we accept the Cross, we bear our pain alone with Him, save for the holy, sympathetic Angels. His grace supports, His Love cheers us. Our communions renew the holy consciousness of that which our Lord is keeping for us for eternity. We understand within our souls the eternal value of communion, and every pain and distress quickens our love in holy aspiration. We feel that, between our joy in communion and the holy experience of His Love in our suffering, there is the closest relationship. We are guided to the knowledge of His Passion because we are proving His Love. And out of all this there springs the holiest movement of conscious love, as we can perceive through all the glory that awaits us. We know and are confident in His Love, and not even the heaviest trials can make us doubt the vision that is slowly opening to our understanding, of the eternal fruit of our communions. At times it is given to us to see the growing influence of our Lord's Indwelling in an ever-widening vision of the glory of the soul lost to herself in Him, taken up, as it were, from all her own natural weaknesses, through self-surrender, through self-renunciation, through the higher movements of love, into the Life which is of Christ and Him only.

3. *THE DEVELOPING GLORY OF SANCTITY*

Sanctity! The soul perfected in holiness; perfected in the way of correspondence to the Divine perfection! How much is involved in that one thought! We think of all the suffering and temptation, the discipline and conflict from which the soul comes forth purified and strengthened. We think of the ceaseless working of the Holy Spirit, guiding the soul in ways of wisdom and love, infusing graces and multiplying gifts. We think of the lifelong communion of the soul with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. We think of the soul responding in all the fulness of her love to all this Divine working, until the Likeness of her Lord is impressed upon her. Sanctity! It is a quality wonderful, beautiful, which takes its light and glow from the Divine Nature, which transfigures and transforms our weakened humanity, until it is capable of beholding the glory of God. "*Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*" So that we have to think of holiness as the aim of our life, as that which is to fit us for the Divine Vision. But it is God's Will that we should see Him, and in His love and mercy He prepares us for the vision.

Contemplate the hosts of the Saints, glorious in sanctity. Let them tell us what is the true end of life; let them witness to us of the power of the life of Jesus in us. "*By the grace of God*

I am what I am." "*I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*" In every one there is the joy of union with their Lord, and in this union they perpetually rejoice in holiness. Their very sanctity is the witness of God in them. The voices of the holy ones who cry, "*Holy, Holy, Holy,*" appeal to them in their ineffable consciousness of what God is; as they behold in lowliest adoration, and perceive that holiness even within themselves. They know in fulness what we know partially. Yet this partial knowledge may be very full of joy and strength to us; it may make us true and brave in life's difficulties, and able, for very gladness of soul, to bear with all that is contrary in the details of every day.

The glory of sanctity is to develop in us through continued correspondence with all that properly belongs to the life to come. And this we are able to do as we go forward in the Life of Communion. In the beginning of our way, our communions were of necessity less frequent, and they seemed separated one from another as only occasional acts of the spiritual life; but now, as years have gone by, and we are more frequent in communion, the whole inner life is raised to the consciousness of unbroken union with our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Oh, that we might perfectly understand and respond to that wonderful fact of Divine Love! And now is our time to do this. The contemplation of Jesus is

the contemplation of all that makes the gladness of the Saints. If we respond to His Love as He reveals Himself to us through the Blessed Sacrament, and within us in the Sacramental Life, there will follow, as a result, a more true development in the way of holiness. Only let us live as they whose whole love and desire is with their Lord. "*Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee.*"

Does this seem a thought of spiritual life, incompatible with our particular surroundings? It is easy enough to assume that our particular surroundings excuse us from a high ideal. It is so easy to be content with things as they have come to be, or as we have ourselves made them, and then to cease from the efforts and aspirations which lift the soul steadily to the ideal of sanctity. But it is possible to attain to holiness; and every life presents some means to that end. We cannot at one step attain to the supreme degree of sanctity; it is to be developed by His Life within us. Only let that Life appear as the inspiration of conduct and speech, and in time the end will be attained. In time that which is lacking to us now will have been won, the defects of character and conduct will have been remedied, through our daily correspondence with the life within us. The steps which we take at the first may be but as the hesitating footsteps of a child, but confidence

increases as we prove His Love, and we are able to do greater things.

But beyond all the efforts which we make of our own wills, there is an action of the Divine Love in the faithful, by which they are separated from the attractions of the world, and led to choose only the things of Christ. All our efforts to correspond with the loving will and purpose of God are rewarded. We are led to a perfect, natural desire for the things of God. The soul may become so occupied with God, "so intent upon Him, that its very first movements, even in adversity, have God for their object and end;" and we cannot but feel that we owe this to the direct working of the Holy Spirit, guiding us into the deeper ways of the truth of God, directing and sanctifying us according to His Own special office, in the perfecting of our souls.

Such entire self-forgetfulness in love for our Lord does lead us deeper into the ways of holiness; and all unconsciously souls reflect the beauty of the Divine Likeness. Each grace as it is perfected makes the beauty more Divine. Such souls are simpler in life and devotion, and humbler in all that concerns themselves, as the work goes on within them. They are hidden from the world, but that does not matter, since it is not for the world that they live. They are dead to the world, but "*alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" May it be ours to be thus more and more "*alive*

unto God," as His Life, imparted to us, becomes the very power by which we live, the very love by which we love.

4. *THE DIVINE WELCOME*

If our communions have an eternal value, as we have seen, then it is fitting that we give a thought at least to the joyful certainty of the Divine Welcome. Not that we can possibly exhaust the idea, but it is well to encourage ourselves by whatever in the way of anticipation is permitted to us. The Welcome of God! In contemplation of this we can but be moved to the very depths of our being. Every high thought of God, every noble impulse, every movement of pure love, must find in that the truest satisfaction. God will welcome us, and that very joy, so clearly promised us, presupposes and implies all that is now making for our sanctification. God Who promises the joy, also prepares us to enter into it.

All that we have considered of the soul's development in knowledge and in sanctity is to be understood in relation to the Divine Welcome at the last; it is the Divine way of preparing us for it. And how patient God is, how gentle in His dealing. He is working, as we judge, but slowly; but only that He may give us a more perfect joy. It sometimes seems to us that our spiritual progress is very slow, that the perfections which we aim at

are so distant that we can scarcely hope to reach them at all; or the temptations of life are so persistent that a great victory of the soul seems hardly to be expected. And yet we forget that God Himself is waiting and watching, with infinite tenderness, the soul in the way of advancement, so that at last the joy of the Divine Welcome shall be not a partial delight, but a perfect and eternal experience.

We cannot do more than permit ourselves to think very reverently of that wondrous welcome with which our Lord will receive us at the last. Thought and feeling need to be restrained in the presence of a prospect so glorious. We can only be guided by what we have been shown by our Lord Himself. He has shown in His Parables that when He comes to judgment all the work and toil, and service and sacrifice, of this life are to be remembered. The faithful servant finds in his reward all the joy of service gathered into the glory of unexpected exaltation. "*Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*" There is the unexpected exaltation of the faithful soul. The merciful, tender, loving souls find their offering of love rewarded with an almost eager welcome of their Lord. "*Come, ye blessed of My Father.*" There is the direct recognition of all that has been done in the earth-life. The fruit of human lives is the

harvest of God. The angel-reapers gather into the Divine Treasury the abiding fruits of sanctity. With this to guide us we may venture to speak a little of the Divine Welcome which must await the faithful after a true Life of Communion with their Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

The Life of Communion embraces, as we have seen, the whole course of spiritual discipline, suffering, and sacrifice. Consider, what will not the welcome of our Lord be for those who for love of Him have been faithful through all? Such souls are privileged to bear "*the marks of the Lord Jesus*," and that, perhaps, with a wonderful exactness, only hidden from the world which does not understand. But at the last, we may be sure, they will find, in perfect sympathy with their Lord, that every pain, every act of sacrifice, is remembered, yea, that what we may reverently speak of as the tone of His welcome, is the reflection of all that He has hitherto effected in and by His Saints. "*Come, ye blessed of My Father.*" That implies admission into the very joy of the Christ. The glory of the Incarnate Lord will be completed in His Saints—one glory, one joy in Him. If we, in His mercy, are found among the Saints, we shall rejoice in every mark of the conflict from which we have come forth "*more than conquerors.*" We shall rejoice in them, because thereby we shall be made more like unto Him. And are we going too far in assuming that as the martyrs come before their

Lord, as they enter into that wondrous communion with Him there, the marks of their sufferings for Him are recognized by Him, with the most tender recognition of love? Must we not say that that very fact binds the souls to Him in a deeper reality of joy? Therefore, if in our own life now we be not martyrs in the ordinary sense of the word, yet in a true sense we are and can be martyrs for Him, taking the marks of this world's suffering and letting them become indeed His marks which He will Himself recognize and rejoice over, inasmuch as, by reason of them, He is able to enter into closer union with us.

Suffering there is for every soul; but there is also joy, even here; and that joy stands in close relation to the Divine Welcome of Jesus. We may be sure that the gladness of renewed communion, and the deep, full sense of life in Him, which is ours here, will be taken up into that welcome. Here sometimes we doubt the reality of joy because of the quickly succeeding shadows and days of depression; but if we would only see in every gift of joy the promise of that welcome of our Lord, how much more truly we should use the joy as a means of more perfect devotion.

Awhile we seek our Lord's covenanted Presence day by day in the Blessed Sacrament; and each succeeding day we should seek Him with a holier steadfastness in devotion, and more sustained recognition of the secret glory of that Presence

in our midst. To us it may be a daily growing into the perfection of life and service, and also a steady advance into the knowledge of our Lord Himself. We are to know Him in the incommunicable knowledge of deep love. That is, by essential, substantial knowledge gained by the daily proof and gift of His Love and our own steadfast response. "*I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.*" In that day He will gather together all that has made our life true in this time, and in that Divine Welcome we shall know that we have reached our Eternal satisfaction.

MEDITATION X

Of Life fulfilled in the Blessed Sacrament

1. *THE APPEAL OF CHRIST THROUGH THE BLESSED SACRAMENT*

There are few things in Holy Scripture more frequent than the appeals which God addresses to mankind. They are constant and most tender. He speaks to man in his better nature; He recognizes his true greatness; He distinguishes the good from the evil in man, that He may uphold always the ideal of his spiritual nature. When we take Holy Scripture as it is given to us, we cannot possibly mistake the wonder, the greatness, the mystery of man's spiritual nature. We cannot mistake the upward tendency of our true life; how it is raised, guided, with only God for its end.

There is an immense pity in the Divine appeal, and the marvel is that we do not trust God more, instead of giving place to doubts of His mercy and goodness. But does God appeal to us only because He would develop our better nature? The appeal of God is the utterance of everlasting Love, and not only the utterance of His Mind towards man, recognizing a spiritual nature in us. Israel was

not allowed to forget this particular truth, "*I have loved thee with an everlasting Love, therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn thee.*" The appeal of God to the erring, sinful nation trembles, as it were, with the force of Divine Love as yet unsatisfied. But it is in our Lord that the appeal of love finds its highest expression. The Incarnation is the one mighty appeal of God to man. It is the presentation through the perfect Humanity of every appeal which God has made to man. All the tenderness and pity which God has shown through the ages is repeated in the words of Jesus, and in the ceaseless outflow of love through His Life, till it finds its complete expression in the cry from the Cross, "*I thirst.*" We understand in those words the intensity of the Divine Love, and more than its intensity. It seems to suggest to us a wondrous feeling on the part of God which cannot be satisfied without the perfection of love given and fulfilled. Until mankind have fully responded to that love, the cry of Jesus will never lose the intensity of its appeal.

But our Lord not only appeals as God in man; He appeals, also, as Man in God. He makes the perfect response of Humanity, showing how man may be true to his Ideal. We can be true to that Ideal only as we respond to the appeal of the Divine Love. And as ceaselessly concentrating the energies of His Sacred Heart, our Lord continues to appeal in love through the Blessed Sacrament.

We have come to understand the Holy Eucharist as the very centre and heart of our devotion and life. All gifts and graces from God are bestowed in communion, and the Divine Life itself is revealed to us. It is the abiding expression of the Love of God towards us. There is, therefore, in the Blessed Sacrament the constant appeal of love from the Heart of God. He speaks to us according to the needs of our own spiritual nature, and if we are faithful in communion to seek to know His Will, we shall learn many a truth about our present state; not always, of course, quite clearly as to its end, but we shall understand, in the light of the Divine Love, so much of the meaning of life as may serve to guide us in our next step. Past failures and past carelessness will be understood through present weakness and incapacity. Our earthliness of thought and feeling will be rebuked in the presence of His pure unearthliness; our aims and ambitions will be judged according to their true importance in the presence of the Life which is eternal.

And yet, although we are conscious of this, we can bear it all. We can bear that all our incompleteness should be thus exposed to us, for it is love that reveals it in most perfect tenderness, most perfect sympathy through the Incarnate Life. Yea, we see all our own shortcomings not only in contrast with that love, but as it were within it, because we are encompassed with it. Let us here borrow

from S. John of the Cross. When describing the Divine action of love on the soul, he compares the imperfect soul to a dark substance, as wood, in the midst of the fire. How dark it looks! How utterly unlike the surrounding fire! But gradually the flame acts upon that dark substance, slowly but surely transforming it, until it becomes all fire. So must the soul be, with all its dark earthliness, within the encompassing of the Divine Love, until all its darkness has been refined away in the light and glow of that heat and love; until it is itself of the nature of that Divine fire of love. Now, when we apply that illustration and see ourselves, with all our consciousness of life, in the midst of that wondrous love, we shall know how much there is yet to be refined, to be transformed. Under the holy influence of that love we see all that lies beyond, we see the great possibilities which are set before us and the greatness of our own souls through its power. We are encouraged by the prospect of spiritual advance; we are stimulated by the love which we feel. We cannot give way. This love which so appeals enters into our being as a constraining force, urging the claim of God, urging the claim of our own spiritual nature. There is, after all, a close affinity between that burning fire of Divine Love and the substance of our own nature, for we were made in the image of God.

There is no possible ground for discouragement

when the soul is alert and attentive to the appeal of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Whatever may have been the neglects and mistakes of the past, the pain of the regretful soul is smoothed by that tenderness which makes even our faults declare the possibility in us of better things. We are bidden to hope, because that virtue is essential to our salvation. "*Ye are saved by hope.*" But more; we are bidden to be strong. "*Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*" The Divine Love calls us to strength through the Life of Jesus in us. The loving, believing soul will answer, "*I can do all things through Christ Who strengtheneth me.*"

2. *THE SOUL'S RESPONSE*

As there is a constant appeal to us through the Blessed Sacrament, so ought there to be a sustained response on our part to this proof of Divine Love. God's Love is given forth to us in communion, with ever-renewed freshness and force; and always we may respond with a renewal of devotion. We ought not to allow a consciousness of past failure and coldness to weaken the devotion of the present; but in each time of communion let our love go forth to Him to meet His Love. We shall experience that wonderful blending of satisfaction and desire which is ever felt with true love. We shall be satisfied, and yet shall but desire the more. The hunger of the soul longing for God, and yearning for the fulness of His Love, can never come to an

end; it can but increase. As He, in His mercy, satisfies the soul more and more, so it should rise up with deepened desire because of all that has been given. We know how the desire for communion does increase, until every day seems unprofitable in which there has been no communion. It may be neither wise, nor possible, to make our communion every day, though, of course, it may sometimes be allowed; but we ought to endeavour to prove the value of that deepening desire for communion by making our own response to our Lord's Love more perfect, through renewed self-oblation. We ought not to let ourselves become slack in our aim; but be strong through our loving self-oblation and humility and patience. Acts of self-surrender and of resignation should be more frequent, in order that not only in intention, but in fact, our lives, down to the smallest details, may be brought into obedience to Christ.

No time can be so fitly chosen for acts of self-oblation than the time of communion, when our Lord calls us to participate in His Own great oblation. "As I of Mine Own Will did offer up Myself unto God the Father for thy sins . . . so that nothing remained in Me that was not wholly turned into a sacrifice . . . so oughtest thou also to offer thyself willingly unto Me every day in the Holy Communion, as a pure and sacred oblation, with all thy strength and affections and to the utmost reach of thy faculties. What do I require of thee

more, than that thou resign thyself entirely to Me?"[1]

Our response is to become the natural and simple movement of our souls, as we are identified in will and act with the Sacrifice of Jesus. We rejoice in the fact of union with Him. Most restful, most holy is our consciousness of it. But oh, let us value it to the full, seeing in it not the end of our response, as though we might rest in the reward of our efforts; but rather see in it the condition which makes for a true response. Let us begin to respond where we feel the grace of union in the Sacramental Gift. It will appear to us sometimes in one way, sometimes in another; but if we are careful to notice it, we shall feel that grace from day to day. And then we must respond, knowing that the evidence of that grace in us is the evidence of the Divine appeal. It is the coming forth of our Lord to attract us and hold us to Himself, and in such a way as to deepen our own knowledge of Him, and our sense of union with Him. We have longed to respond worthily; now, at last, we can offer to our Lord that which, being His Own Gift, is worthy of Himself. The gift of love comes to us with the gift of Himself. That which springs in us from that love we may without fear offer to Him again. But very humble must we be in the exercise of this love. The soul, says Walter Hilton, "seeth well that Jesus is All and

[1] *Imitation*, Book IV., chap. viii.

doth all, and therefore asketh she nought else but the gift of love; For since the soul seeth that her own love is nought, therefore she desireth His Love, for that is enough. Therefore she prayeth and desireth that the Love of God would touch her with His blessed light, that she may see a little of Him by His gracious presence, for then should she love Him; and so by this way cometh the gift of Love, which is God, into a soul. The more that a soul noughteth itself through grace by sight of this verity, sometimes without any fervour showed outwardly, and the less that it thinketh that it loveth or seeth God, the nearer it approacheth for to perceive the gift of this blessed love; For then is Love Master, and worketh in the soul, and maketh it forget itself, and for to see and look upon only how love worketh; and then is the soul more suffering than doing, and that is pure love."[1]

This humble response of love, through the inward gift of our Lord, leads further to the offering of life consciously in work and suffering as an effectual proof of our response. We feel that the answer of love implies the answer of life in union with Him, even to the pain of the Cross. In other words, there is to be no limit to life's response, whether in gladness or in heaviness, in sorrow or in joy, in ease or in pain. Yea, He is even nearer to us when the Cross is most evident. So much

[1] *Scale of Perfection*, Part III., chap. v.

we are bound to own. That which in our Lord became the highest proof and manifestation of love, must in us become the means of nearer approach to Him. Let us rather fear if no cross be about us. It is far worse for a soul to say, "I know not my Cross," than to be able to say, "My life is wholly one Cross." We cannot even follow the Beloved as we ought, without the Cross. "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.*"

When we have proved all this, what will be the character of our lives? Each life will be a sustained response. More, each life, because it is a response, will tend more and more Godwards, while the joy which enters in will be that of God. Our response will but bring us the fuller gladness of communion. Communion! Fellowship unchanged between the soul and God, and all that is deepest, highest, holiest, most perfectly of love. God and the soul meet, and between God and ourselves there is the holiest joy. "*I will dwell in them and walk in them.*" When we have reached a thought like this, it is impossible for us to expand it perfectly, because there is, in the conscious meeting of the soul with God, that which evades or eludes us as we try to define or express it. It belongs rather, in the full understanding of it, to that which must be hereafter. Already we feel it is a revelation of the soul to herself, as well as a revelation of God to the soul; and it is out of that

revelation of the soul to herself that there rises up to Him, in the new-found love in which the soul rejoices, a sustained desire to be more like Him, and one eager longing to be conformed to His Likeness through the purifying fire of the Divine Love.

3. *LIFE ILLUMINED*

We have understood how continual is the appeal of our Lord to us in the Blessed Sacrament. Now, day by day as we respond to the ceaseless claim of the Divine Life and Love, we perceive the deep meaning of our own life We do not understand the true meaning of human life, when it is viewed apart from the possibilities of union with God. The light of God shines upon us; and not only upon us, it shines through the details of each day's life and work, it illumines the conditions and circumstances of our daily experience, it glorifies them, it softens each hard outline with the touch of Divine glory. As may be seen sometimes among the hills or mountains, rough, rugged steps and steeps which look very forbidding in the shadow, but intensely beautiful and glorious when the sun is upon them; so it is with individual lives. There are hard times, and days of spiritual distress, when we can see nothing clearly, when all is darkness and shadow; but if we have learned the secret of Divine Love, and proved the ways of God in the Life of Communion, we shall not be alarmed when

such experiences overtake us. We shall regard them rather as a necessary part of our ordinary, everyday life. We know the light is there, although the darkness seems to hide it. It is shining beyond the veil of our dark troubles, and we can go on bravely. We can, if we will. We have proved so much, known so much of the joy and delight of our Lord's Love in our communions, that to be faint-hearted is to be faithless. And yet it seems sometimes we are tempted to forget what God has done, forget His mercies, forget all the glorious light He has shed on our path; and such temptations foster doubts wholly unworthy of souls who have once known the love of the Sacred Heart.

The tendency of the Life of Communion is towards Light in the fulness of the Life of Jesus. Sometimes we are able to see quite plainly the relation of the present life to all that God is keeping for us. And then how little to be desired do the things of the world appear! I suppose that as we go on developing in this life of love with our Lord, the things of this world ought to appear less attractive; it is not that we regard them as less attractive in themselves, but as less attractive to us, because we behold all things in comparison with that which lies before us, presented in the life and light of God. The light of God discovers to us the true value of earthly things. We can see in them whatever may help us in the way of discipline, or of sacrifice, and we can understand

how God wills that we should use them, and yet not cling to them.

Sometimes the light of God, so illumining our way, will reveal much to humble us, and then we need, with all gentleness and humility and loving self-effacement, to accept the revelation and reject the almost certain temptation to despair. It is one of God's greatest favours when He leads His children in the path of humility. However much we may shrink from it, it is certainly the holiest of ways into which God can lead us; and we may be sure, then, that He has some richer blessing in store, or some fuller experience of His Love into which He would guide us. If once He begins to lead us in the way of humility, not improbably we shall prove it in our next communion, when He will magnify His Goodness towards us. If to-day we have learned something fresh in the way of humility, or have been more identified with our Lord in the humiliations of His Passion, we shall find in our next communion a new joy, a freshness of delight in Him which will both convince and reward us.

Again, the light encourages. If it reveals the truth of earthly things, still more does it brighten and illumine the ways of the higher life and encourage the soul to persevere. There is joy set before us, and the hope which inspires us is almost a foretaste of the glory which we wait for; for is not the glory already within us? The glory which

we shall have, as we trust and pray, with our Lord, is not a glory essentially distinct from that which we have now. We have in ourselves the beginnings of that eternal glory; and is it not increasing through the power of His Love in the light and glow of developing sanctity? It ought to be; and if we consider what it means to possess now that light within, we may permit ourselves to anticipate the day when, in the mercy of God, we may be allowed to behold the Beatific Vision. What will then be the joy of it? What will be the uplifting power which will carry us, as it were, forwards into the Divine Life? Will it not be the consciousness that we have within ourselves that which answers to the Glory of God; yea, that we have within ourselves that which is indeed a part of the glory which beckons us onward and upward into the fuller knowledge of the Love of our Lord? It would be almost impossible for us to explain, even to ourselves, what will be the rapture of the soul's adoration then, just because we can hardly understand in our present state what can be the joy of the soul thus upborne, with the sense of the Divine Life filling and supporting her. But surely within that thought lies the truth of what will be the glory and happiness of the soul in the life of glory.

Can the truth be less than this, while we are realizing all that can be conveyed to us in the Blessed Sacrament? Can we grow into the

knowledge of the Real Presence; can we rest in it, and in communion become "*partakers of the Divine Nature*" and not find the Light of the Divine Life? Can we prove all that is to be proved in the Life of Communion, and not know the meaning of our soul's experience from day to day? Can we realize the value of the Blessed Sacrament in the life of the Church, and not be exalted? Can we look beyond, and when we understand the eternal value of communion, not be encouraged in anticipation of the welcome of God? Oh, the life before us, presented continually in the Blessed Sacrament, is so full, so rich and absorbing, that no thought that is not essentially of it can be at all worthy of us. We live because of our Lord, we live by His Life. Let us, then, walk in His Light. We know and understand our own needs by the very light which guides us to Him Who is our present and eternal satisfaction. Follow Him, and the shadows of earth can never prevail. "*He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life.*" Let us, then, walk in that Light.

4. *LIFE FULFILLED*

Our life can be fulfilled in God, and only in Him. The whole effort of our spiritual life is a recognition of the truth of this: we seek the life in which alone we can truly realize ourselves. Our human life can be completed only in the Divine Life. The sacramental system has been given as

the means to this end. The Sacraments are one and all related in a clear and definite way to some point of true self-realization, and the Blessed Sacrament stands above them all in this, that it is a perpetual witness to our true life. All our experience of the Life of Communion is an unfolding of the truth, and if in all that has been given us to understand of that life, through the considerations which have engaged us hitherto, we have learned both what we are and what we may become, then the work before us is resolved into this—the fulfilment of our life.

We shall attain to this through faithfulness in communion, realizing more and more that the joy and strength of life consist in the Divine Indwelling —Christ in us. Each communion will be to us a step in the upward way from whence we may see the certainty of ultimate fulfilment in the joy of our Lord. We stand, so to speak, with each communion one step nearer the great fulfilment, one step nearer the day of completeness. Each communion as it renews the strength, renews also the hopes, the longings, the aspirations of the soul. Oh, life, as we realize it in communion, should be one of steadfast enthusiasm in all the ways of the Higher Life! We touch the source of eternal things, we feel the spring of eternal life, we catch the early glow that tells us of the coming day of our Lord; we must be strong, alert, and glad.

Life must surely wear for us a new brightness

while we can feel that, through all its pain and discipline, we are finding the true end for which God created us. "*This people have I formed for Myself, they shall show forth My praise.*" Looking up to Him, we can say already, "*I am Thine,*" and in the joy of that we can wait. There ought to be, with the consciousness that we are His, at least a real desire for that perfect patience which is, after all, but a natural fruit of perfect love. Patience is that virtue by which we adhere to God, and it is rendered perfect through love. We are His, and He cannot keep His Own far away from Himself. He will not leave us without the only joy that is worthy of Himself and us—the fulfilment of our love in eternal union. Yes, we may say quite reverently, but in strictest truth, that that joy—the joy of union—is the only end that is worthy of God, and of ourselves as created in His Image. We were created for God—"Thou, O God, hast made us for Thyself"—and therefore nothing short of the Divine purpose can be worthy of the soul whom God has created for so great a glory. To love Him at all is to have that holy certainty rooted in the soul.

Each communion is, in its tenderness, the sealing of every purpose of love in the sympathy of our Lord; and in its strength, the bracing of the soul for conflict and effort; and so it will be until He takes us to Himself, to fulfil for ever His purpose in our creation.

Meanwhile, we abide in the holy strength of our communions; that is our part, our way of keeping reverently, lovingly responsive to our Lord in His promised work for us. "*I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also.*"

MEDITATION XI

Of Spiritual Communion

1. *SPIRITUAL HUNGER*

It is one of the most healthful tokens of spiritual life, when the soul desires her Lord and waits with increasing eagerness for His Self-communication, and most particularly for His communication through the Blessed Sacrament. Such an one has proved the wondrous gift of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament through the experience of His Love in the spiritual life, and has felt what it is to be "*strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*" —the might which is Love. She has found the treasures of His Life through the intimate experience of the Life of Communion, and has felt within the defence of His Peace that she is wholly His. She asks Him to come: "*Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.*" Communion becomes of all experiences the most precious, the most desired. But it may not be possible to communicate frequently, or so frequently as we might desire. Then it is that spiritual communion is found of such great value. Every day upon which we cannot communicate

may be made brighter by an act of spiritual communion, and this should be made a rule for every one. It ought to be the rule for all persons who are communicants; but most particularly does it seem that it ought to be the constant, unfailing rule of those who are called to the Religious Life.

But before we consider it as a practice of the spiritual life, let us notice the spiritual need which inclines us to acts of spiritual communion. I do not think it possible for us to persevere in this as a practice until we do feel we are inclined to it; it must and will be from an ever-deepening desire for our Lord. The truly loving soul, who knows from experience the joy and strength of the Divine Love in the Blessed Sacrament, can never be so completely satisfied in this life as she would wish to be. All her desire is to the Beloved, and nothing but the consummation of her love in Him could satisfy her. Every experience of His Love, every communion, while refreshing her, yet increases her desire for Him. It intensifies the spiritual hunger of the soul, and this state is one of pain, and yet of intense blessedness. The pain is that of deep love; the greater the love, the keener the pain. The blessedness is seen in the soul's capacity for Divine Love. "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.*" There is the Divine recognition of this God-implanted capacity for God Himself. This promised satisfaction leads souls,

and encourages them in perseverance and patient effort. "*They shall be filled.*" Their love is seen in their capacity for God Who Himself fills up the soul with His Own Love. We know what it is to have our souls replenished with the Love of God, and have felt, when we have most earnestly desired to be thus replenished, and have come to our Lord in communion with that pain of love in our hearts, the longing for Him surging up, as it were, and filling our whole being, that all has been quieted and rested in the moment of communion! The pain has been soothed, and desires have been stilled in His Own Presence and Gift—only, perhaps, to rise up again afterwards with a stronger power. But the point is this: our communions do become times of replenishing and of rest, when the longings of the soul are stilled, at least for the time, by Him Who alone can fill up with His Own Love the soul that longs for Him.

And yet with all this, how patient the soul must be! Her hunger after God must never make her impetuous or hasty. The pain of her desire, as it is soothed by the Divine Communication, becomes itself so sweet and blessed that if she did not feel the hunger she would droop in her misery, and she would miss the consolation. It is one of the paradoxes of the soul's life, the more she hungers, the less she would be without the pain. Our Lord can never see a soul truly loving and desiring Him, and not hasten to her relief. To desire Him is

certainly, in His Own time, to possess Him. So we need to be patient. The continuance of hunger is itself most blessed; for it continues by reason of the gift by which the soul is nourished. We can but desire the daily experience of the Gift of Christ, and to that end we shall seek to conquer all inclinations to evil. This, of course, is most important in all who communicate frequently; and if we are to practice ourselves aright in spiritual communion, we must be equally careful about our dispositions. We must be carefully prepared, from day to day, to make our spiritual communion rightly and profitably. What we desire most is that by all means we may be inwardly nourished by the Gift of Christ. We welcome every experience of His Love and Grace, that we may perceive the true fulness of His Gift. Spiritual communion becomes the more blessed as the Divine treasure is understood. The more healthy is the soul's hunger, the more shall we seek with self-control to use the opportunities we have for spiritual communion; and then, on the days when we receive the Blessed Sacrament, we shall find our desire has been exalted and refined, while the welcome of love which we offer to our Lord will be holier in gentleness and chastened devotion. We shall find the practice of spiritual communion will help us in a marked degree for our actual communions, and so it becomes an important matter for the soul who longs for complete

sanctification and complete union with her Lord in love.

It is again of great assistance to those scrupulous souls who seem never ready for communion. "The spiritual cause of scrupulosity is tepidity." Spiritual communion will strengthen them in the way of loving preparedness.

This hunger of the soul for Christ, which should everywhere lead souls to the practice of spiritual communion, is, of course, to be understood most particularly in the lives of Religious. Their very separation must lead to this. They who for the sake of the Beloved have "*left all*," find that they hunger the more for those deep, spiritual consolations which only the most intimate communion with their Lord can secure. And for that very reason the daily Eucharist is a most important matter. It is greatly to be desired that, wherever possible, the Holy Sacrament should be properly reserved. Many are feeling that nothing short of perpetual Reservation can rightly meet the growing desire of souls for their Lord. Any one who has experienced the power of that Presence can estimate the enormous value it is in the lives of Religious. They who, in the very nature of things, are separated from the ministries of the outward life, turn the more readily to those spiritual consolations which, after all, are the richest and most wonderful in the life of their Lord.

But notwithstanding this deprivation which

some of us feel, how blessed is that life which may become so wholly filled with the experience of the Love of Christ! How can we attain to this without by all means corresponding with the Gift, and seeking to know it more perfectly? One way of doing this, at least, is ours in spiritual communion, through which we present to our Lord the single desire of love; and love will ever seek the occasion.

2. *THE PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION*

"Spiritual communion is not a fancy, but a fact." The practice should therefore be maintained in obedience to known principles. "Really and truly by every longing aspiration, every lifting up of the heart to our Lord, we receive Him into ourselves." So one has stated when speaking on the subject of spiritual communion. This at once carries our conception of the practice beyond that which is supposed by the rule we follow of making an act of spiritual communion whenever we cannot make it sacramentally. The loving soul should be ready to make an act of spiritual communion at any time. Thus a spiritual writer tells us that "when the desire for it comes, we should stop whatever we are doing and make the act." This opens a way to unlimited blessing, and it should not be difficult to make the frequent acts. We may always identify ourselves with the Offering, because at some place or other in the Catholic Church the Holy Sacrifice is being offered; and

to It we may turn with desire for spiritual communion. It is known to God where that Offering is being made, and in Him we are brought near to It; and so we may make our act and unite our souls with Him in that Offering. Or we may remember some sanctuary made holy by His Presence in the Tabernacle, and find yet again that the act is made easy.

Our Lord will not leave the Bride-Soul unmindful of His nearness, but will in various ways arouse her feeling and quicken her desire; and we ought not to allow those moments to pass without seeking to use them in some true, responsive way. Sometimes our Lord seems suddenly to arrest the soul, it may be in some work, reading, conversation; and He seems to attract her to some spiritual thought, or to some more loving attention to Himself. There is no way so beautiful in which to make our response as that of spiritual communion. There is no time and no experience in our lives which may not be improved by this devotion. There is no time when this delight in the Beloved should be beyond our reach. That we find it so seldom is because we have not sought it carefully. By means of it all that we love, all that gives us pleasure, may be shared with our Lord. He is with us "*all the days*," and we are to know His Presence not in the dimness of faith only, but also in the light and gladness of love.

The occasions of spiritual communion will not

be wanting in a devout life; reading and study, the work which is a pleasure, friendly intercourse, the enjoyment of natural beauty, will all in their turn become specially blessed, as in them, and by means of them, our Lord comes with the touch of His Love. Oh, if we could only understand always that when He makes His Presence felt, He is also holding for us some gift, how eager we should be to give all heed to His action! How rich the soul would become! How full would be our realization of the treasure of His Love in the light of His coming!

We may compare the practice of spiritual communion with the attitude of the Apostles of our Lord as they awoke to the mystery of the Risen Life during the great forty days. As they went about, as they lived from day to day, they knew not at what moment their Lord might appear. How they must have expected His appearance! How they must have been inwardly preparing to meet Him; preparing, it may be, some petition; thinking of some difficulty about which they would ask Him; preparing some act of love; longing to show him how they had in their own souls sought to correspond with the new revelation of life which He brought, as it were, from the grave. And when He came, how they must have striven to use the occasion! And so, when the Day of the Ascension came, it found them stronger in love and faith, ready to rejoice with Him.

If we believe that our Lord is with us "*all the days*," we must also believe that He will let us know and feel His Presence. We could not suppose He would go through the days and never make His Presence known to the soul that loves Him. Let us, then, watch and use the times when He gives His Presence, as indeed given for spiritual communion. Our days, filled as they must be with so much that is hard in work and suffering and sacrifice, may become truly sacramental. And when the lighter moments are given, and the spirit is at liberty to enjoy those pure delights which yet belong to God's world, she will find evidence of His "*Power and Glory*" through which she may reach even to Him. "*Thus have I looked for Thee in the sanctuary, that I might behold Thy power and glory.*" Refreshed and renewed in the Blessed Sacrament; seeking, finding Him in the sanctuary; she marks more readily His Footsteps in the world and life about her. The evidence brings joy and a sustaining sense of His care for every dark day.

If we ask, then, How often should we make our acts of spiritual communion? we may answer: always when unable to make our communion sacramentally; always when we visit the Blessed Sacrament; always when we are aware of our Lord's nearness, and our hearts are moved in loving welcome. He will come, as it were, saying, "Open to Me," and great will be our joy in bidding Him welcome. "When I went to Holy Communion,"

writes a Saint, "it occurred to me that the door of my heart was thrown wide open, as if for the purpose of receiving a friend; and as He had entered, it was closed. Thus it came to pass that my heart shut itself up alone with its God." If we would so welcome our Lord, we must be ready and watchful, for He does not always linger. Ours, too, may be the experience of the Bride, "*I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone.*" That may be our experience, for all our love, if we are not ready in watchfulness to open the door of the heart to make our spiritual communion the moment He appeals, knowing quite well that He never comes to us with empty Hands.

3. *THE CONSTRAINT OF THE BELOVED*

When we have ourselves resolved to seek immediate communion with God, through acts of love and spiritual communion, we have to remember that we are even then only compassing one side of the truth. There is the other side, the drawing, the constraint of our Lord Himself. "*I am my Beloved's, and His desire is towards me.*" This is one of the most certain, as it is one of the most beautiful, of our experiences in the advancing spiritual life. It is the joy of the soul who not only loves, but knows also that she is herself loved. Some are not quite sure about this. They question themselves in much anxiety: "Do I love God?" At the same time they confess that the

truth of His Love is not felt in all its power to encourage and inspire. In the first place, we should remember that every desire after God is, at least, love in its beginning. And then, secondly, we should certainly love more simply and freely if we looked more for the evidence of His Love to us. "*We love Him, because He first loved us.*" His Love is the very spring and source of our own. If we fail to see His Love and to observe its tokens, our own love cannot become either generous or beautiful; it cannot be worthy of Him; it cannot be the love that He seeks in us; it cannot be the worthy fruit of His Own Love towards us and in us. If we accept the truth that to the soul really loving He comes infusing gifts of love, then it does mean that we must seek to understand His Love and to respond worthily. Our Lord has told us how the desire of His Love is expressed towards us. "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock.*" And we must be dull indeed if we do not understand the occasion of His coming. Continually does He make His desire known by moving the will to respond to His call. And the more faithfully we love, the more constant is His call, and the more intimate becomes the expression of His "desire."

But all times are less than that which is repeated from day to day in the Blessed Sacrament. "The most holy Eucharist is a participation of Divine Charity itself; and is given by

God, in the immensity of His Love, for the direct purpose of nourishing the life of charity within the soul. What is this gift of God's overwhelming condescension but the mystery of Incarnate Charity? Here is the 'Fons caritatis,' the Fountain of Charity, in our midst."[1]

Think of our Lord thus in the outflowing of Love present in the Blessed Sacrament. Think of the soul before Him burdened and troubled; and perhaps not the least of her troubles being the fact that she hardly can realize her own love as she would wish. She is wearied with temptation, and is conscious of weakness; she remembers only too painfully her past failures, and begins to question, "Do I love Him?" We are in this state sometimes; we can hardly escape it altogether. It seems hardly possible for any soul to have advanced in the way of Love very far without having been obliged to face that question: "Do I love Him?"—whether she is brought to that question by a strong desire to love Him more perfectly, or by what is equally likely, a temptation of the enemy to doubt her own love. Then let us look away from self and away from the evidences of our own failure; away from our disappointments and all that would excite us to self-pity, and turn simply to our Lord, that we may see and meditate upon His Love, so evident, so near. We shall find our own love and courage

[1] *The Perfection of Man by Charity*, p. 163.

renewed in the joy of knowing that He loves.

But the Love of Jesus is a constraining Love. We are moved to some holy response in aspiration, or work. We are inspired in acts and works of charity; we no longer feel we have no love, we do love Him, though with all our being we long to love Him better, yea, perfectly, worthily, even as our Lord, mindful of His holy purpose in creating us, would have us love Him. It may be that, in some times of particular devotion and earnestness, we have made a special effort to glorify our Lord by repeated reverent acts of love. The more we persevered the more we desired to love our Lord worthily, to be able to look up to Him, and offer without shame, without any painfulness of shortcomings, the reality of our love. And now our daily experiences but intensify the longing.

And how natural it all is! The very simplicity with which we enjoy our Lord's gifts is the best proof of their reality. In the simplicity of pure love they abide with us, and the enjoyment of them continues and is sustained by every act of Love and Faith, by every glad aspiration by which we seek communion with Him.

In this, again, we prove the value of spiritual communion. The constraint of Divine Love is put forth with most wonderful intent, and we shall find it leads always to closer union and

deeper knowledge. Spiritual communion is a most sure mode of correspondence with that constraining Love. By means of these acts we are able to offer to our Lord the longing desire of our hearts. "We long to be one with our Lord in the grace of habitual union. But habitual union is only attained by habitual love. And habitual love is gained by repetition of its acts." Spiritual communion is essentially an act of love which has for its end the union of the soul with her Beloved. If, therefore, there be this constraint on the part of our Lord in His Own intimate and tender Love towards us; if in His sweet compassion He seeks to draw us closer to Himself; then surely it is in communion that we most effectually offer to Him the longing, the hunger of our souls after Him; and next after sacramental communion stands the holy practice of spiritual communion.

4. *THE PRACTICE IN RELATION TO THE UNITIVE LIFE*

The single end and purpose of the spiritual life is union with God in love. This is the end which we set before ourselves in every spiritual exercise, and no lower aim is consistent with our profession. In our ordinary spiritual exercises we should endeavour to be fully mindful of the end set before us. There is no act of our spiritual life which ought to be regarded as an end in itself; every act should be directed to that wonderful fulfilment of

all devotion: the union of our souls with God in love.

This, indeed, we may maintain of all Christians, that they desire with all their hearts this perfection of love which is so clearly the Will of God for them, and that they should endeavour with all loving faithfulness to attain to it. But Religious are under peculiar obligation in this respect. Who should so consistently desire and seek that union as Religious, who by their threefold vow are separated from the world and devoted to the service of their Lord? And who have it in their power to become more perfectly united to their Lord than Religious?

Among the various devotional acts by which the soul seeks the grace of union, spiritual communion must take a high place. Each act helps to form the habit of love, and habitual love leads to perfect union. How we need to remember this in the days when we are tempted to omit our acts of love; when the spirit is depressed and can scarcely raise herself in aspiration; when the days are so full and duties so varied that we even forget altogether to make the acts! "*Be not weary in well-doing.*"

This slowness which we permit is hindering us in the way of union. We can hardly realize it, perhaps, at the time, because we are wholly occupied with the contemplation of that which looks to us an impossibility. It seems to us sometimes so

far off; the glad hope of some specially encouraging season is not realized; but, after all, the reasons are plain enough. Even though there be no hindrance through our failure in mortification, in prayer, and spiritual effort, there is yet the fact of the greatness of the Love of God which can only be known in its strength and tenderness, its glory and holiness, as the habit of love is formed within us. We must not expect to attain to this without difficulty, and often pain. We must never shrink from painfulness in the course of our spiritual progress. Nowhere are we taught, either in Holy Scripture or by the testimony of the Saints, to expect to attain to the highest save through suffering.

Our acts of love generally, and in particular our acts of spiritual communion, cannot be maintained without effort. We must be ready to make them, even though no sweetness is found in them, if we would overcome the sloth that so quickly lowers our spiritual standard. We are told how devotion, which costs us such an effort, even though we seem to have no refreshment in consequence, is more precious than many a time which seems to us more delightful, because the effort has raised our soul to some higher degree of power through the grace with which God never fails to reward the service of courageous love. The self needs to be mortified, even in devotion, if we desire to attain to the perfection of love. But there is no lack of

encouragement in the way. The sweet sympathy of the Beloved is felt in the calm strength of His Love, which the soul feels, and in which she is herself made strong. The encouragement is found in the reality of love, rather than in any passing delight within the soul; and therefore we should pay little heed to the mere delights of devotion, and devote ourselves rather to the solid interior work of love.

And this is necessary to the unitive life, since in that state the soul advances in a very wonderful and secret knowing of her Lord. Every act of spiritual communion and every holy aspiration perfects the habit of love towards the highest spiritual ideal: "*I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*" As the soul attains to the state of union her acts of spiritual communion are found to be only the more blessed. The reality of the bond between herself and the Beloved gives to the soul the joy of continuous refreshment. It is a true joy, the nature of which we may perceive in that holy consciousness of life which enwraps and refreshes the soul in devotion before the Blessed Sacrament. The movements of the Divine Love are never intermitted, and the soul becomes so faithful in her response that love becomes her sole occupation, and therefore her continuous, interior refreshment.

An act of spiritual communion is to such a soul exceedingly beautiful; in fact, it becomes so beautiful as to be almost impossible to describe. There is only one thing more beautiful, and that

is sacramental communion. Whether prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament, or united in spirit with the offering at some distant Altar, there is a stirring of love towards Him as the "*chiefest among ten thousand.*" But there is more; there is joy for all that He is receiving of love from countless spirits. It is not a selfish joy; it is the generous and free expression of love towards Him for all the worship that is ceaselessly offered to Him: "*Thou art worthy, O Lord.*" The beauty which invests Him as the "*chiefest among ten thousand*" is perceived as we unite with all the redeemed in the reverent homage of love which is the very soul of Catholic worship.

The value of spiritual communion is further perceived in this state because of the close sympathy between the soul and the Beloved. The life, inward and outward, is shared with Him; the past and the present furnish the proofs of His Love: these we gather and offer again to Him in acts of devotion. "At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for Thee, O my Beloved." "All that is bitter and painful I keep for Thy Sake, all that is sweet and pleasant I keep for Thee."[1] "All that is bitter and painful I keep for Thy Sake"—because each thing has been associated with the deepening sense of what He is and has been towards us. "All that is sweet and pleasant we keep for Him"—that is, we keep it

[1] S. John of the Cross, *S.C.*, xxviii. 9.

in order that the offering of our souls may become more rich, more beautiful, more worthy of Him. The one we keep for His Sake; the other we keep for Him.

To this habitual devotion of love we pray that He may lead us, and particularly through the practice of spiritual communion. Doubtless, as we go on, He will unfold to us the secret of His Love, in which consists the true value any and every gift; but we may notice further that God seems sometimes to emphasize certain things to certain souls, as though He had regard either to their weakness or to their peculiar capacities. And thus He magnifies His Love through the most wonderful condescension and compassion; the most wonderful tenderness and sympathy; by all means seeking to bind the soul closer to Himself, by making the way of love easy, pleasant, delightful. "*The Love of Christ*," as each soul seeks to know it, indeed "*passeth knowledge.*"

MEDITATION XII

Of Perseverance

1. *ITS DIFFICULTY*

How continually we are reminded in Holy Scripture of the need of perseverance. Everywhere the spiritual life is presented in the twofold aspect of blessedness and difficulty. Holiness is for all, promised to all, asked of all; but the way of attainment is through perseverance under ceaseless difficulties, and the greatest difficulty of all lies within ourselves. We are so easily drawn away, we have our natural temperament, which sometimes inclines us to slothfulness or unwatchfulness. The overcoming of spiritual difficulty is ultimately the conquest of self. It is this one fact which makes it so hard to persevere. Human nature inclines so readily to self-indulgence and self-pity that there is much real hardness in a life of perseverance. There is a great deal of real hardness which has to be endured within the soul, hidden away from all that can possibly suggest for us an utterance of sympathy, or give any prospect but that of pain. And we cannot be ignorant of this if we know anything about ourselves. We cannot proceed far in

the spiritual life, in ways of prayer and communion, without meeting temptations to slackness. They come to us through a sense of the greatness of the life which seems so far above our powers; or they come in the shape of positive difficulties; or, again, they come through weariness. Days of joyous fervour pass into seasons of dulness, and it seems impossible even to be at rest. Prayers have no light, and our communions no sweetness. God seems to be far away, and we cry for very loneliness, "*Will the Lord absent Himself for ever, and will He be no more intreated?*"

Oh, it is hard so to suffer in spirit; but there is another side of the question which escapes us almost always under the difficulty of persevering. Such difficulty is experienced only by souls who know the Love of Christ, who have had some knowledge of His goodness and of joy in His service. They are the trials of the loving soul, and are to be met in a loving spirit. The world questions and asks why it is that holy souls, loving souls, have so much to suffer; and the world, moreover, judges them inconsiderately, saying that there can be little goodness where there is so much suffering, and when, too, there is so much sadness of spirit. It is because the world never does and never can understand the ways of the spirit. The world does not know that these are so many calls upon the soul's energy, and is blind to the work of sanctification which the Holy Spirit is directing within her.

If on our own part we can recognize the calls upon our energy, we shall be ready in loving response. Nor are we to shrink from the pain of our efforts. It is through such suffering that the higher life is to be reached; and union with the Beloved is realized through our spiritual activities. It is not all hardship when life seems only a struggle with difficulties. There is a prospect, at least, of success; and more, there is a prospect of gladness and final victory. There is for us, as for our Lord in His Passion, a prospect of joy. To persevere, then, is to win the victory of love, the victory which sanctifies and glorifies. And more; we must not look to win our victories at all times easily. Our most victorious efforts leave us often the most bruised, wounded, just because we have partaken of the sufferings of Christ. We cannot endure the Passion in ourselves without showing the traces of the Cross, "*the marks of the Lord Jesus.*"

And so we may find consolation if we have just succeeded in attaining our point, just won our victory. We may be bruised and wounded, we may feel we have done nothing; but better a victory that costs us dearly than one that costs us scarce a pang. And then, how the soul is consoled in her difficulties by the remembrance of the Way of Sorrows wherein her Lord fell beneath the Cross—fell for very sympathy with us, and rose again in the power of His Love—rose

and conquered! So it is the suffering soul that wins through the grace of perseverance, for she knows the mystic meaning of sorrow. She sees in the Passion of Jesus the experience of Divine sorrow, she hears in His cry "the final word of the sorrow that shall . . . wholly purify." We need not, with some, stay to question if such a final word will be spoken. It has been asked, not without a touch of despair, whether that final word of sorrow which will purify will ever be spoken. But could a Christian ask such a question? That final word has been uttered in the depths of the Dereliction from the Sacred Heart of Jesus; it is uttered still in the soul in which He lives in the union of love; and between that soul and Him there is the ineffable joy of love's victory.

All the difficulties of our days, as they urge us on in the way of perseverance, the way of the Cross, do but sharpen the sword which pierces the soul; and the wound of that sword is the Wound of Love. True, we know that that is not the only way in which the soul is smitten; there is something deeper, a wound more hidden than this; still, this is a wound of love, and within the suffering is the joy of assured victory. Just as truly as our Lord went forward meeting the suffering, wounded through the very excess of His Love, so must we expect to do; but as He had the joy of victory within Himself, so are we to have it in the day of our sorrow. The Blessed Virgin felt the sword

pierce through her own soul, the sword of love for her only Son; but so truly was she one with Him in the intent and purpose of love, that she, too, had within herself the secret of the joy, of victory, and was confident beneath the Cross.

How then does this appear when we face the difficulties in the way of perseverance in communion? Are not all our difficulties taken up into the Life of Communion, just because all our hopes and desires and aspirations find tenderest expression in communion? In nothing do we need to persevere more than in communion. I do not say we should persevere only in such matters as frequency and regularity; but in the inner life, that we may realize every possibility of good within ourselves. In meditation upon the Blessed Sacrament we shall perceive degrees of life and of union which are indeed meant for us, but which we cannot make our own save through perseverance. As we return to the daily work and occupation of the world, with these holy thoughts possessing our souls, we shall speedily be reminded of the difficulty of keeping even the thought of what may be. Here it is that love must find its perfect work. All that we have perceived of Divine things has been the revelation of love; and love alone can persevere, love alone can win. So it must be love answering to love, if we are to understand the true value of perseverance. We advance in the way of life "by approaching to

God: and we approach to Him not by the steps of the body, but by the love of the soul."[1] Through the increase of love we shall persevere and conquer.

2. *THE EXPRESSION AND FINAL PROOF OF LOVE*

We persevere because we love. We are inspired thereto, not merely by the thought of gain or advantage to ourselves alone; that could not be love; but by the consciousness of love which is developing towards its own eternal realization in the soul's union with her Lord. The grace of perseverance cannot be given where there is no love, and even when it is given there is still danger of temptation. Love must rule if the will is to be strong and the efforts of the soul sustained.

The reason why so many fail in the spiritual life, or at least fail to advance to any definite degree of devotion, is that in their weakness they shrink from trouble, "being unwilling to endure the least discomfort or mortification, or to labour with constant patience."[2] They shrink from trouble! And how exceedingly subtle a temptation it is! We hardly let it come into our confessions, just because it is a fault that only the closest scrutiny reveals to us; but it is a fault which comes very much into our secret life with God. We shrink from trouble; we love to be at ease, even in our

[1] S. Thomas Aquinas.
[2] S. John of the Cross, *L. F.*, ii. 28.

soul's life with God. There are many who desire to advance, but who will not endure trial; they will not endure the least discomfort to themselves, there is no real spirit of mortification in their devotion, nor in their life generally. But self-loving dispositions can never merit the grace of perseverance.

Oh, why will they not submit to have their love tested; why will they not rather voluntarily embrace suffering and welcome trial for very love of their Lord, and in order that they themselves may become stronger in love!

From the very first the Blessed Sacrament has proved a test of loyalty and love. Its doctrine is so high, so eminently a doctrine of love, that tepid, half-hearted souls are discouraged. When our Lord first proclaimed that doctrine "*many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.*" They had not love enough to perceive that they were words of eternal life; while the Apostles who loved Him remained steadfast: "*Lord, to Whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.*"

And to-day the demand of love is recognized as clearly. Both in teaching and practice the Blessed Sacrament is an abiding test of our love. It demands of us such reverent care, such loving devotion, such humble perseverance, that only a great love can support us in the Life of Communion. It is not as if in the Life of Communion we could

remain, as it were, on one step; although if that were possible we should need special grace to enable us to continue faithful. But the case is far otherwise. The revelation of love in the Blessed Sacrament must ever attract us to higher ideals of spiritual life. We learn the exceeding preciousness of the gift, and before us there extends a path of light and love which ascends to the most perfect degree of union. True love, the love wherewith we may possess the treasure of Divine Goodness, must be strong, courageous, patient. It must be persevering; it must be patient under every trial, while yet it will not be denied; it will refuse to give way. With the determination of Jacob the soul must claim her blessing, "*I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.*" Beholding the essential joy of her life in Christ, she must make it her own through the exercise of love—love that is strong, love that in frequent communion is being nourished with the gift of Christ, love that is becoming more and more Divine. If this seems almost too strong a word to use of the love that we feel between ourselves and Christ, it is yet true. If we recognize that the love wherewith we love Him is His Own gift, it is Divine, it becomes the more Divine. It becomes the more perfect, the more entirely of Him, as we are able to rejoice in our own nothingness, and give to Him the whole glory of love.

But even while love is being thus perfected in

us, and while we are triumphing over much that is outward, we are yet conscious of great inward needs. There are interior dispositions which seem at variance with the Divine Love; there are secret temptations which distract us in the most sacred moments; there are imperative calls for interior sacrifice, interior crucifixion of the self; and only strong, holy love can rise above all these in purity of service. We bring ourselves again and again to our Lord, asking to be searched and purified by His Love. We know that as we are purified, so we are filled with His Love and made strong for effort. "*Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me and examine my thoughts.*" We pray that He may seek the ground of our heart, the very bottom of all, only that He may the more perfectly abide in us, and that from the ground of the heart, enriched with His Love, there may spring up those interior graces in which He can take pleasure.

But how loving must the soul be, responding to this interior purgation! She must respond to every movement of Divine Love, even though there be the abiding consciousness of need. God will encourage by manifestations of love. He will manifest His Love in such a way as not "to conceal the root that remains behind." The soul is not permitted to lose the saving consciousness of her deficiency, lest she should fail in all that has yet to be done. And that will explain some difficulties

of the spiritual life. What do we understand by that consciousness of need and of weakness after our absolutions, when we fear the old temptations? Is it not that our Lord, while cleansing and purifying the soul from actual sin, allows us to feel the presence of the root of sin yet remaining? Is it not to direct us in the way of interior mortification? How humbly and lovingly we should co-operate with God in this work, proving our love by interior perseverance! It is better to know the secret pain of imperfection that keeps us humble; for then we can know the joy of love in spiritual energy; our acts of love will be strong and true; they will declare to the Beloved the love of our souls, and our desire to be only and wholly His.

3. *PERSEVERANCE IN RELATION TO THE DIVINE WORK*

We have to think of our perseverance as standing in direct relation to the work and the purpose of God, both in us and towards us. And if perseverance were nothing more than that to which our thoughts have so far been guided, it would be great and ennobling; but there is another view presented to us: it is the only way by which we can work with God in the fulfilment of His great purpose of love towards man, and then also by man, seeing that He has called us to act always in co-operation with Himself.

As we advance in the Life of Communion and perceive the power of His Life and Love in us, working ever towards perfect union, we are led to a certain generosity in our own work and devotion. We feel constrained to do our utmost to give with great generosity of love and affection and devotion to our Lord. We live, not for our own ends, but for the perfect work of God. We work, we suffer, we accomplish, in union with our Lord. We are members of His Body. We live no life of our own. If we labour, it is that we may rejoice with Him. If we suffer, it is with the hope that we may at last reign with Him, being glorified with Him. We are branches of the True Vine; the glory of our life's fruitfulness is not ours, but His. We are fruitful only as we abide in Him. "*If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered.*" We are "*workers together with Him;*" but the work, the design, is His, not ours. And yet in His Love He wills to share the joy and glory of its perfection with us.

So great is the ideal, so wonderful our life, when seen in relation to the Life of Jesus our Lord and Head, that S. Paul's words, "*I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,*" seem no longer to present an unapproachable standard; but to be rather the simple expression of the truth of the soul's life both in its human and Divine side. We live by the power of God, live because of Christ. We abide in Him, and He in us, for that very end, that

we may with Him realize the eternal joy of the Divine purpose, fulfilled in love. That joy has been in the Mind and Heart of God from all eternity. It will be ours also, even here, while we are working in living union with Him. It will be ours perfectly hereafter, when we shall eternally realize that for which we were created. To persevere in the attainment of that end implies not feverish, excited efforts in the work of life, nor quick emotions, nor impulsive spiritual action ; but rather the calm, steadfast response of the soul, in thought and word and deed, to the impulses of the Divine Spirit. It is the realization in everything of our Sacramental union with our Lord. It is the giving of the soul's best, as alone worthy, not only of His acceptance, but also of His use, as He develops through us the purpose of His Incarnation. God uses the lives which He has made strong through His Own grace, and sanctified through the operation of His Own Spirit. So we have to remember in all our perseverance that we are making it more possible for Him to work, more possible for Him to use us in the fulfilment of His Own purpose. This is perseverance as we may understand it who are called to the Life of Communion.

We may feel at times how real is this life which flows from Him to us, how grand the share in His purpose of love, and yet fail to realize it in the actual labours of our own lives. We cannot

be rid of the pain, or the disappointment, either in the outward concerns of life, or in the more intimate matters of the soul. But at the point where we feel this we should be able to realize most the sympathy of our Lord; because it is through those things we realize most perfectly what His Own Life was in this world, what the Passion was to Him, what the sacrifice of the Cross meant to Him. We even feel the stirrings of loving desire to suffer with Him if only we may be like Him.

As we realize these things, His holy sympathy braces us to fresh efforts in the way of perseverance. Through the lives of all His members, through all the details of their life's experience, there runs the golden gleam of His Love. We call it sympathy, for it is love which unites the worker, the sufferer, to Himself in the bond of a common experience. We may say that at the parting of the ways of human life, where the paths lead to joy or sorrow, loss or gain, there He sets His Cross, the symbol of His Love and Victory. He suffered as we suffer, He toiled as we toil, and all for the same end, the triumph of Eternal Love. And He lets us feel how we are helping on the great end, by first of all making us feel His Own tender sympathy. We can be brave, then, to do and suffer, for within is the whole inspiration of the love that knows and feels, the love by which He rejoices in and with the soul in the very midst of her pain. "*Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they*

have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

How often is that true of the souls in the very fire of temptation and persecution! The Son of God is with them, and they know His Presence. The Life of Communion is the very walking with the Son of God. And if that be so, the life of perseverance becomes a very wonderful, a very beautiful life; because we cannot walk with the Son of God in the midst of our life's difficulties and temptations and not persevere. Our very perseverance is the sign that we are walking with Him. We are, then, to lift up our hearts in holy, loving confidence, and in the peace of that Presence persevere.

Sooner, perhaps, than we think will all toil and effort be over and the welcome be given, "*Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*" And if in the mercy of God it be ours hereafter to have those words spoken to us, how shall we not remember our past failures to follow perseveringly in the way of life, and mark afresh how God accepted what we did and forgave that which through frailty we left undone!

4. *THE REWARD OF PERSEVERANCE*

It would both assist and encourage us if we would more often contemplate the reward of perseverance. It is certain. It is promised to those

who overcome. They were not figures of speech which our Lord used in His messages to the Churches of Asia.[1] He was speaking to those whom He knew certainly would have to contend in the way of righteousness, who would have to strive earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints, who would have to overcome again and again ere they won the crown of sanctity. But to the soul that perseveres there comes, in due time, the reward. But in what does the reward consist? It is the reward of love, and cannot, therefore, be measured by the terms of any single statement. It can be known and possessed only within the soul. It is the secret experience of love between herself and the Beloved. "*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.*" It is a reward, moreover, that is not wholly reserved for some future day; it is a present reward which, however, develops towards the perfection of joy promised by our Lord "*to him that overcometh.*"

Consider, first, the reward as we find it in the present. We have seen that perseverance is properly the movement of love. We may define it as "Love in action." Now, love is the reward of love; and though we look for victory and the joy of conscious attainment as the end of perseverance, it is not in these that the true reward is to be sought. It is to be sought and found in the depths of our souls, in the innermost reality of love, as

[1] Rev. ii.–iii.

through perseverance we are led to closer union with the Beloved. This is true both of the present and the eternal enjoyment of our reward. It is not, and it will not be, in something wholly external to ourselves. Rather shall we delight in the visible glory of our inheritance among the Saints through love made perfect in us.

And further, the reward of perseverance enriches the offering of love. We take the joy which comes with increasing consciousness of spiritual power, the joy of victory and of spiritual gain, and use them for the enrichment of our personal offering, even as the Elders whom S. John beheld casting their crowns before the Throne. The love which enriches us is really His, and in it consists the merit of our offering. But the joy of the soul is reached in the Divine acceptance, which further magnifies the love.

But the most precious aspect of the reward consists in that intensely real, but nameless, degree of love which the soul perceives between herself and the Beloved. He imparts to her a degree of love, so tender, so strong, and so intimately personal, that all her efforts seem as nothing in the sweet communication of His sympathy; and her own love is met by His in a manner so wonderful that she cannot speak of it save to Him; it is, as it were, "secret," and known only to the soul and her Lord. As we go on in our spiritual life, and our Lord comes to us strengthening our souls

inwardly by the infusion of His Love, we find that there is that in our experience which is not capable of being communicated to another soul. We are sensible of the need of guarding it within ourselves as a matter intimate and personal between ourselves and God. And this secret of love becomes the inspiration of the soul's life; she ceases not to persevere, for so only does she retain this intimate consciousness between the Beloved and herself. This fills her communions with a delight far beyond anything she knew at the beginning, and through communion she begins to experience the joy of the future reward. Of that future reward no one may speak, since no word can describe it. "It is in truth the Vision of God, and there is no expression by which we can explain what it is to see God." But our Lord Himself has explained so much as we can bear in the seven words He has spoken in the Apocalypse, giving us a conception of its completeness. Thus: "*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.*"—"*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the Crown of Life.*"—"*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden Manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*"—"*He that overcometh and keepeth My words to the end, to him will I give power over the nations.*"—"*He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment.*"—"*Him that overcometh*

will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out."—"*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.*"

All these convey an expression of the joy of the Redeemed in the Reward of Perseverance. And see how they all speak of the secret of the Divine Love; every feature of the reward takes its meaning from the Beloved Himself. And again, the soul loses nothing of her individuality, but finds it in the most perfect self-realization. The "*white stone*" and the "*new name which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it,*" suggest a higher form of recognition springing from the consummated relationship of the soul to Christ in perfect union. But the perfection of the reward consists in the exaltation of the soul who through love has triumphed in and for her Lord. "*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne.*" Into that joy of perfect association we cannot look save in the secret moments of pure contemplation, wherein our Lord will communicate to us the love which contains the promise of all that is eternal, the secret of that which He wills to be to the soul that loves Him.

Meanwhile we need to pray for the grace of final perseverance. We have not yet resisted the last efforts of the enemy, nor won our last victory. Only while we persevere are we safe; for perseverance is the evidence of love which at once urges

and attracts us towards the highest. Our communions exalt us in union with our Lord, and strengthen us in hope and love for all that awaits us of trial here; but, above all, of glory in the Eternal Kingdom of the Beloved.

Unto which may He bring us of His Mercy.

Laus Deo

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it enters into the acts and plans of every country.

"It is fear that is responsible for the enormous armaments—that distressing spectacle of peoples still bleeding and exhausted from a terrible war, requiring all their resources and strength for recovery and peace, yet taking upon themselves the crushing burden of our modern, costly, destructive weapons, to be ready if need be for another conflict.

"The remedy is not for us who are more securely situated to censure and condemn those less fortunate than ourselves—that is only an aggravation. But it is for us to join with them in the common task of removing fear.

"We see the corroding action of fear upon the minds of men wherever there is cynicism. It is the cynicism of fear that discourages effort by calling it useless. It chills the nobler aspirations of men by impugning their motives and by magnifying their follies. The cynic may try to conceal his timidity beneath the cloak of fairer phrases, but at heart he is craven. Whoever sneers, fears. He lacks the courage and the skill to lead men to achievement; he can only follow in the rear and blame them. He faints when hard service is to be done, and shrinks at every blow.

Each Must Overcome Fear.

"No less is fear the foe that every man must overcome in his own heart. Whoever fails to bear witness to the truth, whoever keeps silent in the presence of wrong, whoever yields his principles of honor under the pressure of circumstances, whoever stands falteringly and faithless before some lofty enterprise, is the slave of fear. And it is this same weakness which holds a man back from the full exercise of whatever capacity God has given him and from his utmost accomplishment. In that matchless parable of the talents there is a striking comment made of the man who put to no service the sum entrusted to him. When called upon to render an account, this was his answer: 'I was afraid, so I hid thy talent in the earth.'

"Over against this blighting fear in all its manifestations we look to you. We look to you because we believe that within you is the gift not of fear but of power. However stubborn may be the physical obstacles that stand in the way of ideal aims, you know that 'no man ever fails till he fails inside.' Like the Roman commander who was cut off in a wilderness and outnumbered by the enemy, you will 'take counsel of your own valor.'"

DIVINITY OF CHRIST, AND THE EUCHARIST.

At the opening session on Tuesday Dr. Sparrow Simpson built up a strong and severely logical argument for the Divinity of our Lord, and the Rev. G. D. Rosenthal followed with an eloquent and glowing picture of the Church, which moved the large audience to much enthusiasm. On Wednesday the Warden of Keble spoke of the Eucharist as the chief act of Christian worship in a very able paper, which was enlivened by many shrewd and amusing comments. The Rev. G. G. Elliot, of St. Bartholomew's, followed with a paper on Preparation for Communion, both spiritual and physical. In speaking of the ancient custom of the fast before Communion, one of the few ancient traditions which never absolutely died out in England, he expressed the opinion that in view of modern conditions and habits the question of dispensation in regard to it was one which required to be faced.

INCARNATION AND SACRAMENTS.

At the evening meeting the Rev. G. H. Clayton (St. Mary-the-Less, Cambridge) spoke on the Sacraments as the extension of the Incarnation, and also of the Atonement, and the application of them not only to all men but to each individual. But, he said, we know quite well that to some saintly people the Sacraments seem to mean little. We may not say these lack grace, for God fulfils Himself in many ways; but upon them we may fairly urge three considerations—the value, in the discipline of character, of obedience to Christ's ordinances; the value of participation in the Sacraments in strengthening fellowship; and the value of such participation in guarding against undue individualism and narrowness. The latter part of Mr. Clayton's paper seemed especially cogent and valuable.

† "He owned in all my country
The stars the foreign lands."
Grotesque demands.
Fawn o freason
the associate flesh o pictorial victory.
sufficient salary to prevent daily anxiety

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